DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 204 100 RC 012 855

AUTHOR Bussard, Ellen
TITLE Planning for Declining Enrollment in Single High School Districts.
INSTITUTION Educational Facilities Labs., Inc., New York, N.Y.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Apr 81
GRANT NIE-G-78-0189
NOTE 79p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Change Strategies; College School Cooperation; Consolidated Schools; Decision Making; *Declining Enrollment; *Educational Planning; Educational Strategies; *High Schools; Rural Areas; School Community Relationship; School Districts; Secondary Education; *Shared Services; *Small Schools; Urban Areas
IDENTIFIERS *Single High School Districts

ABSTRACT

Written for school districts with one high school, this report is designed to help communities plan for fewer students at the high school level. The report is divided into four parts. Part I discusses the nature of the problem, the difference between elementary and high school decline, and the special case of the single high school district. Part II presents numerous strategies which are available and should be explored, together with examples and indications of where they might be appropriate. It discusses strategies within the school system, strategies in cooperation with other school districts, and strategies using educational and community institutions outside the school system. Part III explores issues and concerns which are common to many school districts considering decline and strategies from the perspective of different constituents. It covers the role of the high school as a community institution, the comprehensive high school, high school faculty, high school space and facilities, scheduling, transportation, working with neighboring districts or other institutions, program costs, and roles of the states. Part IV offers concrete advice on how to plan for decline. It discusses planning, defining problems and goals, setting priorities, exploring and evaluating options, and developing a plan of action. (Author/CM)

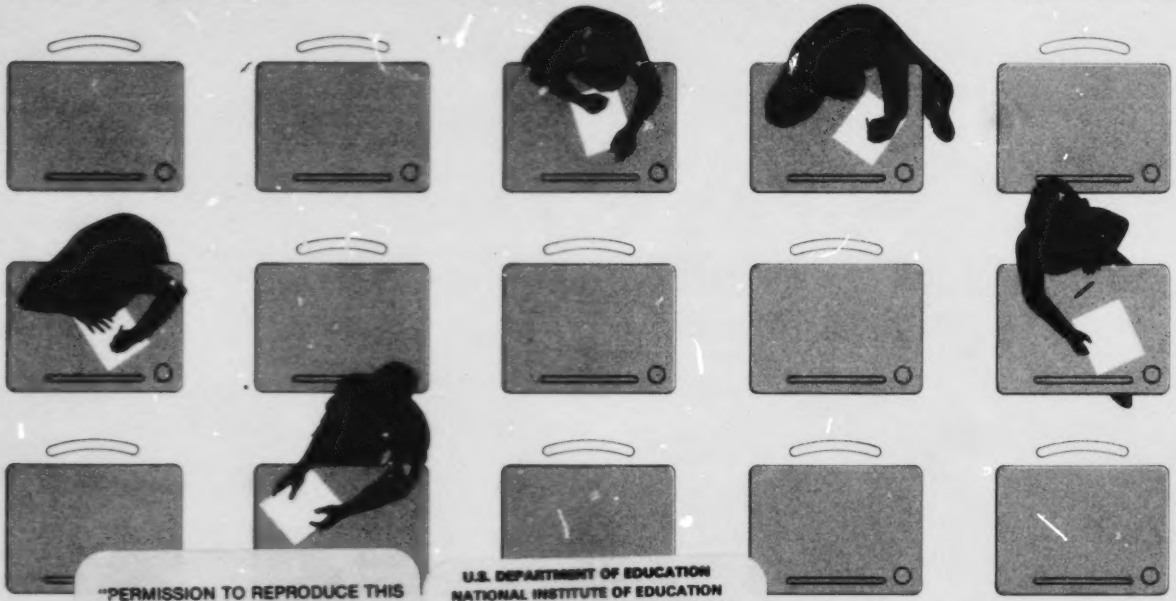
****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

rec Aug 10, 1981

ED204100

RC 012855

Planning for Declining Enrollment in Single High School Districts



"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

_____

_____

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☑ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

The National Institute of Education
U.S. Department of Education
Washington, D.C. 20208

Planning for Declining Enrollment in Single High School Districts

Educational Facilities Laboratories
Ellen Bussard and Alan C. Green

U.S. Department of Education
T.H. Bell, Secretary

Office of Educational Research and Improvement
Donald J. Senese, Assistant Secretary-Designate

National Institute of Education
Milton Goldberg, Acting Director
Marc S. Tucker, Associate Director for Educational Policy and Organization
David R. Mandel, Assistant Director, Educational Finance

April 1981

ii This project was supported by the National Institute of Education, ED, under grant number NIE-G-78-0189. The opinions expressed in this report are those of Educational Facilities Laboratories. They do not necessarily reflect NIE position or policy, and no official endorsement by the National Institute of Education or the U.S. Department of Education should be inferred.

Acknowledgments

We are enormously indebted to the six single high school districts that participated in a special consortium formed for this project, and to more than fifty people from those districts who joined with us. This was a mutually beneficial forum. While we provided them with assistance in sorting through issues and strategies in their own districts, they provided us with valuable ideas and critiques, and helped us to see the wide range and complexity of issues facing individual districts.

We also would like to thank the numerous researchers, superintendents, and others concerned about high school enrollment decline, who freely shared their ideas and experiences with us. We owe special thanks to the following people: William Keller, Noble J. Gividen, Charles M. Achilles, Charles F. Adams, Milton Miller, Melanie Barron, Joe Amyot, Irving Peterson, Ray deFeo, Ira Singer, Cyril G. Sargent, and Jane Silverman.

Contents

***Introduction* 1**

***Part One: The Nature of the Problem* 5**

Change **7**

High school and elementary school decline: how they differ **8**

Single high school districts: an overview **8**

The single high school district consortium **9**

Underlying questions **10**

***Part Two: Strategies to Consider* 11**

***A. Strategies Within the School System* 14**

1. Relax, and approach normality **14**

2. Make changes within the existing school structure **15**

3. Reorganize district grade structure **17**

***B. Strategies In Cooperation with Other School Districts* 20**

4. Share programs/services/staff with other school districts directly **21**

5. Share programs/services/staff with other school districts through a regional consortium or educational agency **24**

6. Consolidation **27**

***C. Strategies Using Educational and Community Institutions Outside the School System* 29**

7. Widen or redefine clientele **30**

8. Work cooperatively with colleges and universities **33**

9. Work cooperatively with other community agencies, businesses, and individuals **35**

In sum **38**

***Part Three: Common Concerns and Issues* 41**

The role of the high school as a community institution **43**

The comprehensive high school **44**

High school faculty **45**

High school space and facilities **49**

Scheduling **50**

Transportation **51**

Working with neighboring districts or other institutions **52**

A matter of size **55**

Money **55**

Roles for the states **56**

In sum **57**

***Part Four: Decision Making* 59**

Stage One: Getting started **61**

Stage Two: Defining problems and goals **69**

Stage Three: Setting priorities **70**

Stage Four: Exploring and evaluating options **71**

Stage Five: Developing a plan of action **74**

***Final Words* 77**

Introduction

By now, many communities are conscious of declining enrollment in their school populations. Many have closed elementary schools and reduced the number of elementary teachers; others are in the process of doing so. Whether they have planned ahead or been caught by surprise, whether they have wide support for a school consolidation plan or are in the midst of acrimonious disputes and court fights, they *are* dealing with elementary school enrollment decline.

Too few of these communities, however, are planning ahead for the high school enrollment decline which is about to arrive as smaller classes in elementary grades move on through the school system.

Yet, if anything, it is *more* important that communities plan for change in high school enrollment. Because of the number and specialization of courses, and the specialization of the teaching staff, planning for the high school is more complex than for the elementary school.

There is no excuse for *not* planning. High school enrollment figures can be projected with great accuracy years ahead of time. The students in first grade today will be ninth graders in eight years. The small enrollment classes in fourth grade now will be ninth graders in five years. For many districts the impact of smaller classes is already being felt in the high school now and will be acute within three years.

There is a special urgency for this planning in school districts with a single high school, a category that includes roughly three out of four school districts in this country.

Scope of decline

Not all school districts will experience decline in the high school. There is wide variation at the national level, and at the regional level as well.

National figures record the peak year of public school enrollment, grades 9-12, as 1976. A 25 percent decrease from that peak is projected by 1989. These figures average out areas of growth, stability, and decline. For regions of the United States that do have declining enrollment – especially the northeast and north-central regions – the number of high school graduates is projected to decrease anywhere from 20 percent to 40 percent or more. Twenty states are projected to graduate at least 20 percent fewer students by 1995.

This degree of decline will change the high school. In the near future school districts with one high school will not be able to offer the programs they do now, in the manner they do now.

Single high school districts

School districts with one high school do not have the option of closing and consolidating schools as they did at the elementary school level. The "flash point" of public awareness which came with announcing an elementary school closing will be lacking. Without it, there is danger of a false sense of complacency regarding the high school.

Yet for districts with one high school, declining enrollment requires fundamental reassessment of the purpose of the high school and the role of the high school in the community; defining what the high school should be and do in

and prepared and circulated a paper on the subject. We brought in another expert to lead a workshop for the high school principals on techniques for projecting enrollment and staffing needs in high school program areas. Panels of consortium members gathered for several full-day meetings and two-day retreats. They shared their concerns and ideas with each other and with us. They served as a testing ground for evaluating strategies.

The consortium was a valuable resource in developing this report. Opinions, concerns, and examples from the consortium are cited liberally. Perhaps even more importantly, member districts found the consortium forum helpful in carrying out their own planning for high school enrollment decline. They suggest that other districts might consider establishing consortia as a planning technique.

The report

This report is written for school districts with one high school – for people in the community who care; for school district administrators, teachers, and board members who must make decisions and carry them through; for students who will feel the result of changes; and for community institutions which share the concerns and impact. One thing is very clear – the high school is a *community* institution as well as a school, and the future of the high school is a shared community concern.

The report will help communities plan for fewer students at the high school. We approach the central topic from four directions:

- Part One discusses the nature of the problem, the difference between elementary and high school decline, and the special case of the single high school district.
- Part Two presents numerous strategies which are available and should be explored, together with examples and indications of where they might be appropriate.
- Part Three explores issues and concerns which are common to many districts considering decline and strategies, from the perspective of different constituents.
- Part Four shifts to offering some concrete advice about going about the task of planning for decline.

6

Adaptation to decline is going to be a very important skill in the years ahead. If we are only adapted to growth, then we are likely to make a tragic mess of decline. There is a strong case to be made for the argument that decline requires greater skill, better judgment, a stronger sense of community, and a higher order of leadership than growth does. It is easy to adjust to growth. If you make mistakes, time will generally correct them. If you put too much into one segment of the system, all you have to do is wait a little while and hold back the growth of the overextended section and the other sections will catch up with it. In decline, however, time aggravates mistakes. It makes it much harder to achieve the proper proportions of the system, as it is the achieving of these proper proportions which is one of the major functions of leadership.

– Kenneth Boulding

Change

When we talk about declining enrollment we are addressing a particular kind of change. Change is nothing new to most school districts. In the late fifties and sixties many school districts now in decline were in the midst of rapid growth. While most communities were enthusiastic about growth, it presented some very real problems: rapid change in the size and even the character of the population; change in community expectations; escalating expenditures with which even a growing tax base strained to keep pace; changes in the character of the high school and the high school program; and sometimes overcrowding of high school space, leading to split sessions or use of temporary classrooms. Many communities are still paying off the bonds from that period, and financial constraints today are serious. However, growth itself was not seen as a problem, despite the difficulties it imposed.

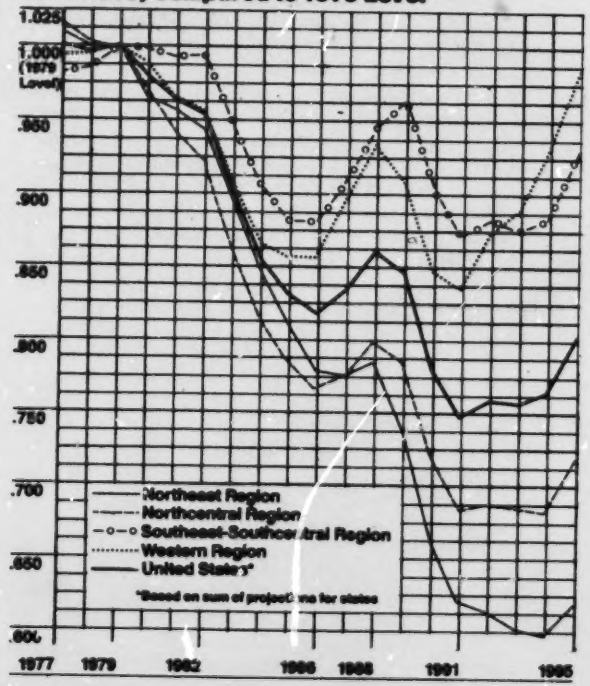
In contrast, decline has always been perceived as a problem with a capital P and there are psychological, logistical, political, and human issues which make managing decline more difficult than managing growth. It is easier to hire new people to meet the needs of a growing school population than to fire faculty members who have made a valuable contribution in the past. It is easier to bring in personnel with new skills than to develop the full range of skills needed with limited personnel. It is easier as a staff member to welcome new colleagues than to say goodbye to old friends and wonder whether you will be next. It is easier to mold new school traditions than to change or end old ones. It is easier to be a school board member or a superintendent announcing the opening of a new school or the expansion of a program, than bringing the news of a closing or a cutback. It is easier to improve a curriculum by adding to it than by restructuring it.

Most school districts would no doubt choose stability or some measure of controlled decline that could be handled gradually, but decline in school age children is the result of major demographic and economic changes in our society which school districts cannot control. These forces, such as lower birth rates, regional economic conditions and migration patterns, aging of communities and changing distributions of age groups, and escalating housing costs, make it unlikely that stability will be the normal condition in most school districts.

Change is a fact. Most recent projections indicate widespread decline through the end of the 1980's. The conditions of change will vary from region to region and from community to community. But clearly your high school, with fewer students in the mid-eighties, will not be the same as your high school today, just as your high school in the late sixties and seventies was not the same as your high school in the 1950's.

While the implications of decline and change may be different for large and small districts (something we will discuss later in this report), the fears and the overriding issues are common, regardless of the size of the high school. People in a district whose high school of 2,000 is projected to fall to 1,500 or 1,000 are just as baffled by change as those with a high school whose enrollment will

Pattern of High School Graduates By Region, 1977-1995, Compared to 1979 Level



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

the next 5 to 10 years, and how to do it. Planning of this scope is not a matter of juggling numbers of students, teachers, and rooms, to be done by a clerk or even by a school superintendent. It has to be a result of community-wide discussion and development of community consensus.

The change that is likely to take place without planning is a slow erosion of the high school program which was supported by large numbers of students and which community residents have come to expect – many elective courses in a wide range of fields, many advanced courses, special art or theater or vocational courses, sports, and other extracurricular activities. Awareness of the impact and change in the school may not come until it is too late.

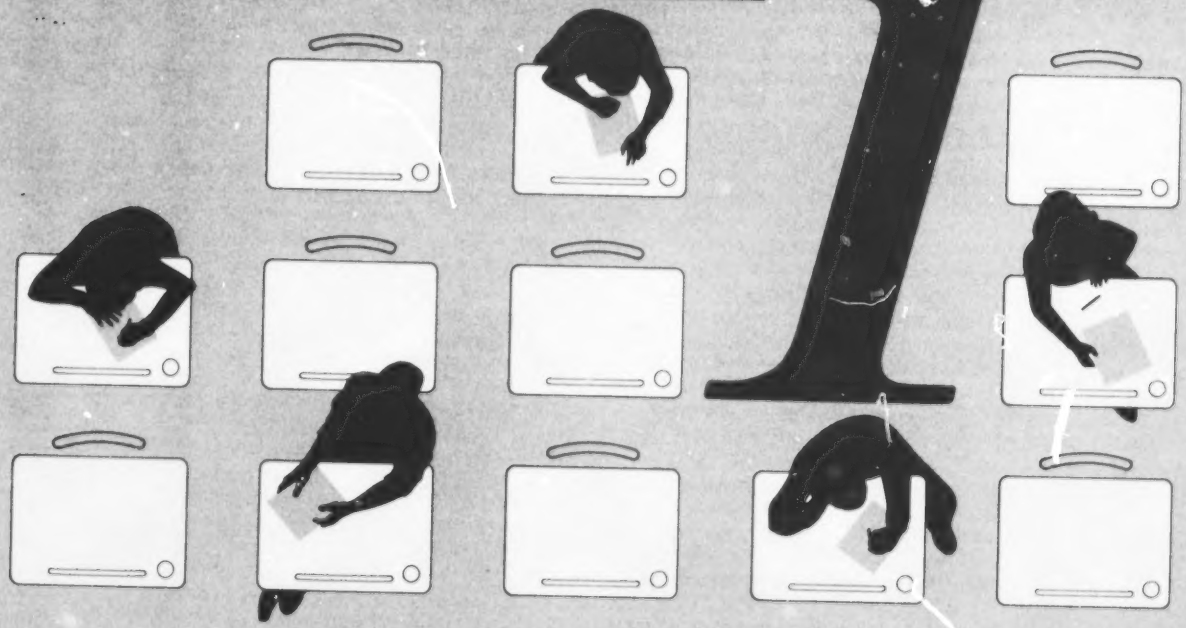
The consortium

In preparation for this report, Educational Facilities Laboratories formed a consortium of six single high school districts facing decline. The consortium included rural, suburban, and city districts. We worked together with a wide range of people from each district – superintendents, teachers, parents, students, principals, school board members, and community residents without children in school.

We formed a partnership of sorts with these districts. We shared with them the results of our research in developing strategies. At their request we quizzed leading experts on cooperative arrangements among school districts,

Source: "High School Graduates: Projections for the Fifty States," Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 1979. Courtesy of William R. McConnell, WICHE.

Part 1



The Nature of the Problem

drop from 1,000 to 700, or from 500 to 350. The question is how will your school change: by increments responsive to immediate crises or by planned changes which preserve the qualities you value? And who will do the planning?

High school and elementary school decline: how they differ

The scope and structure of the high school program, and the nature of the high school faculty, create some fundamental differences between enrollment decline at the high school and enrollment decline in elementary schools.

In contrast to the elementary school, where classes at each grade are similar, the high school offers specialized courses and individual students take varied programs. The number and variety of courses have increased greatly over the past 10 years. Declining enrollment may be unevenly distributed over courses and programs, and thus will not be as visible as in the elementary school setting.

The high school faculty consists of specialists who are certified according to state regulations by subject area and grade span. This is in contrast to the generalists who comprise the elementary school faculty. Just as there has been increasing diversity of courses in the high school over the past decade, there has also been increasing faculty specialization. It is much more difficult to shift faculty within the high school than it is in the elementary schools.

In general, the public high school is a more important institution to the total community than an elementary school, which is likely to be one of several in the district. In a single high school district, all parents of children in the public schools have an interest in the high school. Even residents without children in school feel the high school is important. It may be the location of varied community events, and is often one of the largest and most prominent buildings in town.

Parental and community expectations strongly favor a "comprehensive" high school which offers many program options for students with different interests, goals, and needs. The elementary school does not have such diverse demands put upon it.

Because elementary school decline can be met by shifting students and teachers, consolidating classes and even schools, surplus space is often a key focus of planning. In the high school, beyond a certain point, consolidation of classes is not practical and surplus space is not likely to be as great an issue, particularly in single high school districts. The focus of planning will be on programs and staff.

These substantive differences between high school and elementary school imply that response to declining enrollment will have to be substantively different.

Single high school districts: an overview

About 73 percent of all K-12 or 1-12 school districts in the United States are single high school districts. That amounts to some 8,000 of the total 11,000 K-12 or 1-12 districts in the nation. Single high school districts are naturally found among school systems with small total enrollments. Approximately 75 percent of districts with

enrollments of 300-5,000 are single high school districts. In districts with enrollments of 5,000-10,000, 60 percent have only one high school. But there are single high school districts among larger systems as well. Fully 20 percent of the districts with between 10,000 and 25,000 students are served by a single high school.

Aside from this common characteristic – the single high school – these school districts differ in most other ways. Some are sparsely populated rural school districts with small enrollments and very large geographic areas. Others are small towns, with small enrollments and a small service area. Some districts are sprawling suburbs and have large enrollments. Some are located in small to medium-size cities. Single high school districts also vary in the richness or scarcity of resources, the diversity or homogeneity of students, expectations of the community, and the diversity and types of programs.

Despite the many sizes and types of communities which fall within the net cast by "single high school district," they are united in a few important ways. The strategies available to them in planning for enrollment decline are fundamentally the same. Their concerns about decline and about issues and strategies are surprisingly similar. And finally, more than other districts, the high school in the single high school district is the focal point of school tradition and community educational pride. It is often the reference point for an overall sense of well-being about the community.

The single high school district consortium

The districts participating in the consortium for this report are typical of the diversity of such districts more generally.

- One district is rural. In an area of 140 square miles it has a total population of 4,000. All 1,200 of K-12 students are housed in a single building.
- Two districts are small suburban towns of a few square miles, with total populations of 9,000 and 12,000. K-12 enrollments are 1,200 and 2,200, respectively. Both have three elementary schools and one junior-senior high school with 7-12 grades. One is more affluent – property taxes and per pupil expenditures in the larger district are twice that of the other.
- Two districts are large suburban districts, whose boundaries cross several town lines. Total population in these two districts is 20,000 and 40,000; K-12 enrollments today are 3,000 and 4,000. One has five elementary schools, a seventh-grade school, and an 8-12 high school; the other has three elementary schools, two junior high schools, and a 10-12 high school. Both have the highest per pupil expenditures of the consortium districts.
- One district is a city of 72,000 with a K-12 enrollment of 9,600, more than twice that of the second largest district. The district has 10 elementary schools, 2 junior high schools, and a large 10-12 high school.

All of these districts have had declining enrollment since the late sixties and most have closed at least one elementary school. High school enrollment is also down, and projected decline in the next five years ranges from 25

percent to 35 percent. For the city district this means a change in the 10-12 high school enrollment from 2,700 to day to 2,000; for the rural district a change in grades 9-12 from a little over 400 to just over 300.

Each of these districts is grappling with the issues presented by declining enrollment and changing circumstances. Some are just beginning the process; others are further down the road. In some of the districts, decline is relieving overcrowded conditions in the high school. In others, declining enrollment is cause for serious, immediate concern.

Each of these districts will ultimately make different decisions in planning for the next five years. They have different populations with different expectations, different geographies, different political climates and structures, and different resources and constraints. As they develop their goals, explore their options, weigh the costs and benefits in the broadest terms, they will head off in different directions most appropriate to them.

We will refer throughout this report to the consortium districts and share their concerns, deliberations, analysis of strategies, and proposals for a process of community planning.

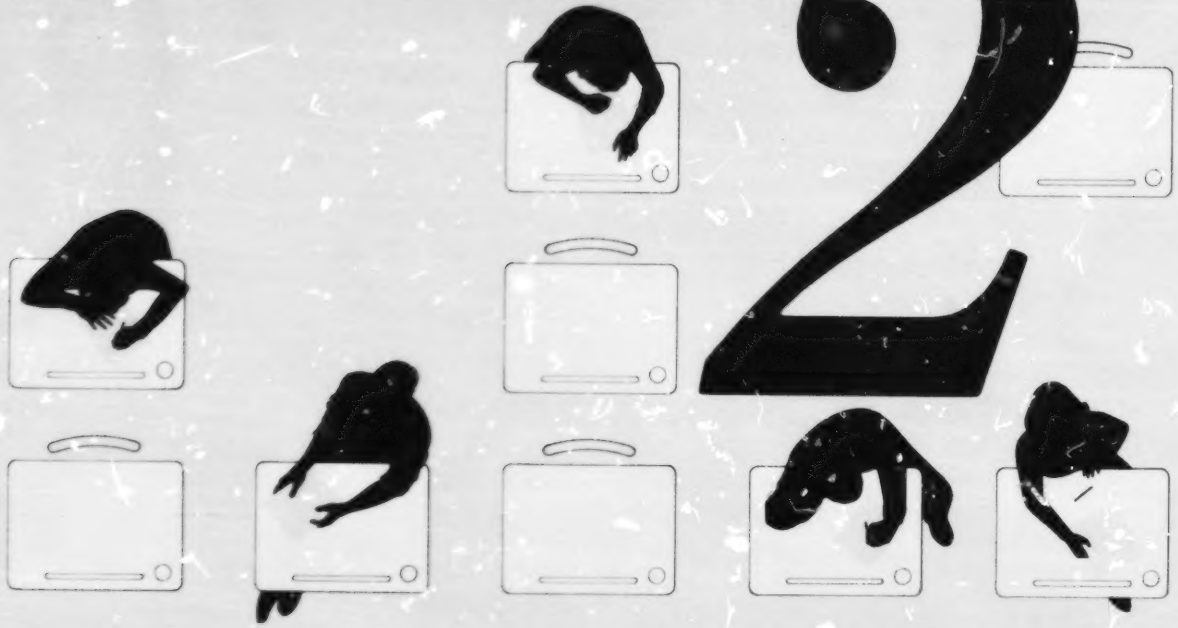
Underlying questions

Planning for the future, exploration and evaluation of alternative strategies, can only take place once the overriding questions have been answered. What do we, as a community, want the high school to be in the next five years? What do we care most about? What do we want our children to learn in high school, and what must they learn to be productive members of tomorrow's society? What is the best way for each of them to learn? What role do we want the high school to play in our community? Who will be the clients of public education in the future? What are the responsibilities of the school to the community and of the community to the school?

Single high school districts, because they cannot consolidate schools or continue business as usual, are forced to ask and answer these questions if they are to plan responsibly. Preliminary review of the strategies that follow may bring into sharper focus the importance of these questions in planning for the near future. Each strategy assumes a slightly different role for the high school and reflects different priorities. In the end, selection of strategies will depend upon developing clear agreement about the goals of the high school and weighing the advantages and disadvantages of each strategy as a means of achieving those goals.

Part

2



Strategies to Consider

Many strategies and approaches are open to districts in making the high school fill the role you want it to, with fewer students – from changing program and staff structure and scheduling practices, to sharing programs with other school districts, colleges, and community organizations.

In this section, we present a number of strategies which each district should explore. None of these strategies will probably offer *the* single answer. Some will be applicable to all districts, some only to a few. One district might pursue several strategies at the same time. For example, different strategies may serve different program areas. Music and team sports might be conducted cooperatively with other districts; advanced math programs might be available at a local college; foreign languages might be restructured around independent study within the district. Some strategies may have immediate or interim value, others value as long-range solutions. A single district might move through a progression of strategies as the number of students decreases.

Few of the strategies are really radical in terms of being untried. Most have been used by other districts and examples are given. Although not all examples are limited to single high school districts, the principles they illustrate are applicable. Some have been used by small rural districts, some by rapidly expanding districts. And other options are in use by many districts for special programs or as enrichment opportunities. The strategies cover quite a range in terms of the degree of change from normal, existing practices. Some require only minor modifications from business as usual; others require fairly radical restructuring of school district programs and policies. Serious consideration of these strategies as a means for dealing with decline will probably be new for most districts.

We suggest that you review these strategies early. They will help you broaden your perspectives and stretch your thinking. An early review will also reinforce the need to define goals clearly for the district and the high school, and to understand local constraints and opportunities.

The strategies are presented in three broad categories:

A. Strategies within the school system, which may alter how programs are delivered, but which use existing resources already available within the district;

B. Strategies in cooperation with other school districts, which may involve sharing programs, staff, students or facilities, or indeed may include consolidating school districts, but which continue to serve the traditional high school student with traditional high school teachers;

C. Strategies using educational and community institutions outside the school system, which may alter the traditional concepts of high school student and teachers by forging new alliances with colleges and community organizations, and broadening the clientele of the high school.

The previous numbered page in the original document was blank

A Strategies Within the School System

The first set of strategies is closest at hand – within the school system itself. In many communities and school districts people first want to explore what they can do on their own – with their own facilities, students, and staff – and under their own local control.

1 Relax, and approach normality

For some single high school districts, enrollment decline may actually be welcomed. If the high school was so overburdened at its peak that classes were held in broom closets, portable classrooms were parked on the lawn, or classes were scheduled in split sessions, declining enrollment may enable the school to operate more normally. If crowded conditions actually curtailed programs, fewer students may allow new programs to be started.

This may be a viable long term strategy for large high schools, because they have enough students to continue specialized courses simply by offering fewer sections, and can maintain normal staffing patterns. The city district in our consortium, with a high school of 2,700 students, is in this position. The building is now at capacity and classes are above the union minimum size. For most high schools of medium or small scale, however, this strategy will be only temporarily appropriate. Several of the districts in the consortium are feeling relieved of pressure at the moment, but also recognize that in a few more years continued enrollment decline will require some active changes. They feel this is a temporary period which gives them some breathing space and time to plan for the future.

Relief from crowding by itself may allow administrators and community residents to develop new programs or new organizational patterns for the high school which were simply not possible before. A large high school may be able to reorganize as several schools-within-schools, and begin to reduce the anonymity that sometimes plagues students in large schools. New programs, for which there was no room before, may be instituted – such as alternative programs for students in trouble, for gifted students, or for students who need a more structured or a less structured environment. One of the small town districts in the consortium is using newly found space in the high school to establish an in-school suspension program, and a remedial reading lab.

Looking forward to decline is a nice situation to be in, if it signals the end of a tough period. However, unless the high school has a large enrollment, the relief is likely to be temporary. While all schools can look forward to more elbow room – maybe even offices for department heads – and to more relaxed relationships among students and faculty, people in smaller schools should not get lulled into complacency. For them, it's a time to monitor trends and make plans to offset the effects of continued decline in a few more years.

2 *Make changes within the existing school structure*

Making changes within the existing school and existing grade structure of the school district may be a strategy of choice or necessity.

It may be a strategy of choice if community people, and school people, feel strongly about solving problems on their own. If a tightly-knit high school community exists and the relationships which it fosters are highly valued, then people may want to preserve that above all. Even an already small high school may choose this option if smallness itself is valued. This strategy may also be chosen if absolute "local control" is valued, or if community residents are not against the general concept of sharing, but object to potential partners. It may be a strategy which works well and efficiently for some programs, but is not a total answer.

It may be a strategy of necessity if grade structure changes are not wanted or are not feasible. For instance, residents may not want to bring lower grades into a school which already houses grades 7-12, or there may not be room in the high school building to put another grade of students. Geographic isolation from other districts or other educational institutions may rule out many cooperative efforts. Finally, a district may be forced to look inward if neighboring districts are not interested in sharing and other community institutions offer few resources. A district with more minority students or with lower socioeconomic levels than its neighbors may find itself effectively isolated.

Changes which a high school might make under this strategy include:

- changing class size and structure, including greater use of independent study and tutorials, greater use of educational technology and packaged independent study programs, a few large lecture courses;
- combining several related courses in the same room, at the same time, such as two science courses, or two levels of a foreign language or art class;
- opening elective courses to several grade levels and offering each course in alternate years;
- reducing the number of elective courses and/or increasing the number of required courses;
- retraining or recruiting faculty competent to teach in several areas;
- changing schedule of the day, week, and/or school year to make better use of time and staff resources in carrying out other changes;
- remodelling school facilities to assist above changes if necessary – for instance more small study and conference spaces for independent projects and small meetings with teachers, creation of a "small theater" for large lecture courses by combining two classrooms. (Specialized facilities used for only one purpose part of the day are wasted, as are large classrooms used for small classes. Spaces which are made more flexible can be used throughout the day.)

All consortium members wanted to examine this strategy first, to assess what would be possible without grade reorganization and within existing resources. Only after assessing the feasibility of this set of strategies, and identi-

fying its limitations, did they feel motivated to consider other strategies.

Within the consortium, the rural district felt this strategy was the most likely to succeed – in part because of geographic isolation and the dollar and energy costs of transportation, and in part because of a tradition of self-reliance and value in personal relations possible as a small school. This district is now seeking to fill an open math position with a person certified in math *and* science but so far has been unsuccessful. Several of the suburban consortium districts are now offering electives in alternate years, combining several levels of language in the same class, etc. One district is undertaking review of numerous elective courses in social studies and English, with an eye toward combining the best units of each into a fewer number of courses.

Strategies Useful in Periods of Rapid Growth Also Work in Decline

Change School Year Structure:

Shorter "semesters," and more of them, were designed to increase the number of courses which could be offered – they may prove useful in retaining courses, too.

- **Manchester, Georgia; Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, and others converted to three 12-week sessions, from two 18-week sessions.**
- **John Dewey High School in Brooklyn has five terms/year.**
- **The Tatnall School in Wilmington, Delaware created 22-day units, which are combined into varying length "terms," depending on the course.**
- **Ridgewood District, a single high school district outside Chicago, recently adopted a two-semester year, with all classes offered on a semester basis, as a response to declining enrollment.**

(Teachers work with fewer students each day and have to prepare for fewer classes each day, students show more enthusiasm, have a wider selection of courses, and can repeat a course without repeating a whole year.)

Change School Day:

Fewer and longer blocks of time, and extended hours, originally intended to expand facility use, may also increase choice and flexibility and promote use of other strategies.

- **Manchester has a morning and an afternoon instructional period, each 2½ hours long. A middle period of 80 minutes is used for lunch, clubs, and activities.**
- **A rural school in Dallas Center, Iowa (total K-12 enrollment of 900) also uses this schedule.**

(Students take two courses per trimester. Teachers can teach six courses per year, take inservice training one trimester, or plan new courses, etc.)

- **Shrewsbury has three time periods: 8 a.m.-2 p.m., 2 p.m.-4 p.m., 7 p.m.-9 p.m. Students and teachers elect which to attend.**
- **Las Vegas, Nevada created an elective evening high school program, 3:30-9:30 p.m.**

(In both cases, teachers volunteered to teach additional hours and part-time teachers were more easily available for evening hours. Both districts found, to their surprise, that many people who had dropped out returned, and that people who had never been to high school came for the first time.)

Change School Week:

Developed first to relieve crowding, a shorter school week can not only give teachers time for inservice training or achieving certification in other areas, but can also make other strategies, such as joint programs with other districts, or use of other community resources, more feasible.

- The four-day week, produced by slight extension of each day, is found in Shrewsbury, Unity School District, Maine, and is an option at John Dewey High School in Brooklyn.

(The fifth day can be used for work, vocational training, or other programs which take students away from the high school. Reduction of transportation costs in large rural districts may allow funds to be redirected to programs.)

Increase Independent, Self-Paced Study:

Use of programmed instructional packages (written, a/v, television), and independent research with occasional seminars or tutorials, can allow more individual attention to more students with fewer teachers.

- "Skill centers" for self-learning of specific skills are widespread.
- Renovating lab-type classrooms (science, arts, languages), and restructuring curriculum around independent or small group lab "exercises" can allow one teacher to supervise many activities. Small high schools across the country – Kohler, Wisconsin; Housen, Idaho; Schenvus, New York, Tululiah Falls, Georgia – use this approach.

Although this option may be appealing, in that no new relationships have to be forged with other school districts or other institutions, and it preserves much of what is familiar about the high school, it is not easy. In fact, the changes that may be necessary under the "in-house strategy" may be quite radical. It's not just a matter of eliminating courses with fewer than a minimum number of students.

3 *Reorganize district grade structure*

If the school district is operating a three-year high school, grades 10-12, one of the most pragmatic strategies may be to move the ninth grade in and create a four-year high school. This strategy is widely available to large school districts and to many medium-sized districts, if declining enrollment will produce extra space in the high school. (Four out of five school districts with total K-12 enrollment of 10,000-25,000 and two out of three with enrollments of

5,000-10,000 have three-year high schools. Roughly one-third of school districts with total K-12 enrollment of 2,500-5,000 also have three-year high schools.)

This strategy has the following advantages:

- Ninth graders can be integrated into a more comprehensive program, particularly if some elective courses are open to all grade levels. They can take courses requiring special facilities or special faculty which may not have been available at a junior high school.
- It may allow a desired switch to middle school organization, which had not been feasible while the ninth grade was part of a junior high school.
- It allows better use of specialized facilities and common facilities (shops, gym, lunchroom).
- It makes better use of specialized faculty, without requiring retraining for multiple competency.
- It maintains local control of high school programs.

In medium- and large-sized districts, the school system which has a three-year high school usually also has two junior high schools with grades 7-9. Grade reorganization can be accomplished through consolidation of the two schools into a single 7-8 junior high, or a 6-8 middle school, with further consolidation of elementary schools. In both cases, one junior high school becomes surplus in the process.

There is a political advantage to the reorganization from a three- to four-year high school in that it is not very controversial. Often a district has wanted a four-year high school, perhaps even had one in the past, but large numbers of students forced the high school to be limited to three grades. Junior high schools have never developed the loyalty that high schools and neighborhood elementary schools have among parents. (Unless, perhaps, two junior high schools located at opposite ends of a large school district have developed extreme rivalries).

Nor, despite heated debate, have educators come down strongly in favor of one grade sequence in the middle years. In fact, in the face of changing enrollment, many are seeing the middle grades as "swing years," that could be equally well served in almost any location, depending on enrollment numbers.

One of the suburban consortium districts is in the process of implementing this strategy. During years of rapid growth, its four-year high school was converted to a three-year high school and a second junior high school was constructed. Now, with enrollment in grades 10-12 currently at 1,100 and projected to reach 825 in four years, the ninth grade is coming back into the high school. One junior high school is being converted into a 6-8 middle school and the other is being converted into a community activities center.

Although following this strategy enriches program offerings to ninth graders and makes better use of facilities and faculty, it does not by itself solve all the problems of declining enrollment at the high school. It fails to address the issue of low enrollment courses which could not be bolstered by ninth graders (primarily advanced, specialized courses) and needs to be combined with other strategies.

High School Grade Conversions

• The White Plains, New York school district, which declined from a total enrollment of 8,000 to 6,200 in eight years, instituted a comprehensive districtwide grade reorganization. Not only did the high school convert from three to four years, a move long sought but unfeasible before decline, but four elementary schools were closed, and two former junior high schools became, respectively, a citywide 5-6 intermediate school, and a 7-8 middle school. The surplus elementary school buildings are being leased to other educational users.

• The Herricks school district in Long Island, New York also converted a three-year high school to grades 9-12. One junior high school became a two-year and then a three-year middle school in a phased process tied to continued decline. The second former junior high school is finding new life as a community center.

An extension of this strategy to include lower grades is also being seen in smaller school districts, but accompanied by more controversy. Districts with four- and five-year high schools are considering bringing the eighth or seventh grade into the building to create the combined junior-senior high school. This grade structure is already common in small districts, such as the two small town consortium districts. Some districts may even choose a single 5-12 school. (Historically, new building and building improvements in small districts have often focused on upper grade levels. The best *facilities* in the district may be found in the high school.)

While this extended strategy makes better use of facilities, and may permit reduction of expenses in other parts of the school system, it addresses the issue of high school programs only to the extent that specialized faculty may be retained if they are qualified to teach all grades. Many school people, and most of the parents in the consortium, feel that younger students should continue to have separate extracurricular activities, and if possible, should occupy separate space in the building. In districts where the high school has a small age span now, there is often concern about older and younger students mixing. (On the other hand, in very small districts with a single K-12 building, relationships among older and younger students are cherished by some teachers and parents.)

The other suburban district in our consortium has a single seventh-grade school, which itself is an anomolous product of a desegregation plan and enrollment figures. As soon as enrollment decreases enough, the old school will be closed, and a 7-8 junior high program will be operated in the high school building. The junior high program will be different from the high school program, and will occupy a separate floor of the building.

Don't Forget the Empty Building

Grade reorganization will produce a surplus junior high school or other building.

Planning for reuse of that building – for community purposes, for lease, rental, or sale – should be part of

planning for reorganization. Don't wait until the building is empty. And remember, because junior high schools are *much* larger than elementary schools, planning appropriate reuse will be more complex.

Grade reorganization requires careful looking at numbers of students and size of buildings, and cannot be implemented until there is a reasonable match between the two, but it cannot be *just* a numbers game. It must be based on program and quality rationale. And, by itself it is not a panacea. Low enrollment advanced courses in upper grades still need attention.

B *Strategies in Cooperation with Other School Districts*

The possibilities for sharing with other school districts are many and varied. The motivation for cooperation is today more likely to be to preserve or improve programs which might otherwise be jeopardized by low enrollment, compared to the 1960's when the motivation was to develop new programs in areas such as vocational education or handicapped services.

Sharing or cooperation is a means, as the superintendent of one of our consortium districts said, "to enable us to offer a comprehensive educational program, even if we can't have a comprehensive school."

Sharing strategies may pool students in a single location, move teachers or administrators among schools, bring specialized facilities or equipment to schools on a rotating basis, or bring students and teachers together across large distances through technological communication links. Cooperative ventures may be for limited purposes – a particular course or activity, for entire program areas, for a variety of services and programs, or, in the extreme of school or district consolidation, for the whole high school program.

Mechanisms for cooperation among districts vary from informal or formal agreements between individual boards, to district-initiated consortia, to state-sponsored regional agencies. Permanent consolidation of high school programs may be instituted through development of sending/

receiving agreements, formation of regional high school districts, or consolidation of one or more K-12 school districts.

Voluntary cooperation strategies work, of course, only if districts are mutually interested. Consortium members from several districts expressed concerns about sharing control of programs with other districts, as well as working out the mechanics of scheduling, administration, finance, employment, and transportation.

School districts experienced with sharing offer the following advice to neophytes: start slowly; work out details ahead of time; develop written agreements; start small or with enrichment programs that don't compete with existing programs; plan to revise agreements based on experience; and provide for termination or withdrawal.

Finally, programs which are voluntary need to be aggressively promoted within participating schools, particularly if they require students to move between schools. Students have a natural tendency to remain in their home school unless the advantages of a program elsewhere are clear. If programs offered in other schools are considered part of a school's course offerings, the school provides for transportation, too.

4 *Share programs/services/staff with other school districts directly*

Cooperation among school districts whose needs are similar or complementary is a relatively direct way to preserve or expand programs, if it is legal in your state.

In direct sharing, school districts seek each other out, develop agreements among themselves, determine length of commitment, assignment of responsibility, and so on. District personnel administer the cooperative venture. Beyond these basic characteristics, what is shared and how it is shared can vary tremendously.

A narrowly focused example of cooperation would be two districts sharing one music or Latin teacher on a half-time basis, with one district hiring (or retaining) the teacher and the other district paying half the cost. Several districts could form an informal "talent bank" to match staff competences and needs for part-time teachers.

A broad example of cooperation would be several districts, each with unique faculty strength and facility support in a different area, splitting up responsibility for entire program areas among themselves. One district's high school might specialize in art, another in science, and another in foreign languages. Students would cross-register for courses at whichever school they wanted.

Several districts might jointly sponsor sports teams, orchestras, clubs and other extracurricular programs. Or, districts could cooperatively provide support services – inservice teacher training, curriculum review and development, administrative services.

Direct cooperation offers these advantages:

- Separate agreements can be made with different districts to suit specific needs.
- Participating districts can make use of their own strengths and draw on strengths of other districts.

- Districts are free to pick and choose partners which they feel are compatible.

Direct cooperation also raises a number of concerns:

- Extensive sharing with a single neighboring district seems to raise anxiety among residents about future plans for consolidation.
- School boards and administrators are wary of how much administrative time will be involved.

All of the consortium districts are in early stages of exploring areas of cooperation with neighboring districts. The rural district is looking to cooperative long-range planning with four other districts. District officials want to weigh benefits and costs of transportation between schools (the nearest is 12 miles away), because several schools have good facilities to support different programs.

The two suburban districts are exploring possibilities of sharing in low enrollment courses (advanced courses, foreign languages, industrial arts). One district, with a greater number of minority students than its neighbors, reports that the neighbors are not interested, in part because of race, in part because administrators are not concerned about decline. Officials in the other suburban district are proceeding cautiously because they think there will be great reluctance to share, on the part of their *own* residents. This district is wealthier than its neighbor.

The two small town districts are also considering direct sharing. One is seriously looking at consolidation with a neighboring district – but sees sharing as an interim measure until decline is enough that the two student bodies could be accommodated in one school. The second district is in the talking stages with contiguous districts – seeing what might be common needs, etc. The city school district already runs an extensive occupational and vocational education program jointly with another nearby city district.

Assembling a Quorum of Students

- **High schools in Pleasantville and Briarcliff Manor, New York are only about a mile apart. Students can enroll in specialized courses in either school. One school hosts a ski team and the other a gymnastics team, both open to students from both schools, and several joint clubs are being developed. The program is small, and hampered by lack of transportation and school schedules which are not compatible.**
- **Not far away, three small Hudson River villages have started sharing programs, because of declining enrollments. In its third year now, no school has yet been forced to cancel courses, but courses available at only one of the three are open to other students – fifth-level languages, photography, and aviation. Two of the districts now have common schedules, and one district bought and operates a minibus for all three. The districts are having difficulty trying to work within traditional 45- or 50-minute periods.**
- **A special, cooperative alternative school, for students in grades 7-12 who are disruptive (and would be suspended from their home schools), has been formed by school districts throughout Tulsa County, Oklahoma.**

- Staples, Minnesota runs a summer school which includes remedial, makeup, enrichment, and accelerated courses. By running its buses through six neighboring small towns, the district provides specialized courses to those students, not available in their regular school programs.
- Leyden Township, a Chicago suburb, developed a staggered schedule to facilitate program sharing between the two high schools in its district. The two buildings, which are 20 minutes apart, operate on schedules which are staggered by 25 minutes, so that students can take a bus between schools and lose a minimum number of periods for travel.

Moving Students to Special Facilities

- Hackensack, New Jersey is the host district for a special cooperative program. Eleventh grade students from a number of nearby districts spend the mornings in Hackensack – the first 1½ hours at the local hospital where they train in different departments, the rest of the morning at Hackensack High School for courses in anatomy, physiology, and medical terminology. Afternoons are spent back at their home high schools.
- In Wisconsin, five rural districts are cooperatively developing a vocational education program, using facilities in each of the five high schools. Each high school is developing facilities and staff in one of five areas, and students travel to whichever school houses the program they want.

Moving Special Facilities to Students

In places where special facilities are needed, and are *not* available in any school, mobile facilities can be used.

- In rural South Dakota, several vans, each equipped with special equipment for vocational education (building trades, machine tools, etc.) make the rounds of several districts, staying nine weeks at each.

Sharing Teachers or Administrators

- Twelve small districts in Iowa share six superintendents. The time the superintendent spends in each district is proportional to the proportion of salary the district picks up. Distances between schools range from 6 to 30 miles. Among the advantages is that it increases the ease of sharing other personnel among districts.
- Small high schools of Buena Vista County, also in Iowa, cooperatively planned a method for providing foreign language instruction, adapting an existing program of audio tapes and printed materials for self-instruction. Schools cooperatively hire foreign language teachers who travel between up to seven schools. Students work independently, using tapes and workbooks on days when the teacher is not at the school. This allows, as well, for self-pacing by each student. With individual tapes, many levels of language – in fact many languages – can be taught at the same time.

- **In a remote area of Alaska, specialist teachers are flown in for one day/week to tiny village schools. School schedules are formed around the fact that the math teacher comes on Monday, the English teacher on Tuesday, etc.**

Using Communication Networks

- **In Montana, five school districts teach cooperative business courses, using a simple technology of amplified telephone service. Students stay at their home schools, use texts and worksheets made available beforehand, and a teacher in one school runs the class. Through a conference call arrangement, students in all schools can talk with each other and with the teacher.**
- **Similar arrangements, with more sophisticated technology of television, are in use in rural Iowa. Newly developing techniques of interactive television will open up new possibilities.**

Direct sharing offers many possibilities for preserving or expanding programs. To work well, many operational details must be coordinated – teacher contracts, areas of responsibility, transportation and scheduling (if students are moving between schools), methods of evaluation, and so on. Efforts must be made to assure that those who are "shared," whether students or faculty, feel welcome in all participating schools.

5 *Share programs/services/staff with other school districts through a regional consortium or educational service agency*

This strategy is similar to the previous one, and the range of activities and arrangements can be just as broad. However, a third party coordinates cooperative ventures among member districts. It is a more formal arrangement, in that the consortium or agency is a legal entity, has a board of directors and an administrative staff, and tends to have long-term stability. If the consortium offers many services, members can generally choose to participate in only those services which meet their needs.

The mechanisms for such sharing arrangements already exist in over 30 states through school study councils, regional educational service agencies, boards of cooperative educational services, etc. Regional consortia have been used for programs for the handicapped, purchasing and other central nonacademic functions, special education and vocational programs, among other things. A recent study of New Jersey school districts reported that nearly one-half of the state's 580 local school districts are part of some kind of voluntary cooperative. Numerous co-ops are also reported in Texas. It may be relatively easy to expand the role of existing regional organizations to meet the needs of declining enrollment. Establishing a new regional consortium or agency where none exists is also possible, but may be cumbersome without support from a state education department.

A regional organization eliminates the need for each district to seek out partners separately for each program. Administrative functions, such as hiring and assigning teachers, bookkeeping, and scheduling can be handled by agency staff. This can offer districts with limited administrative resources a very efficient working arrangement.

Because regional agencies draw on a large pool of member districts, using them as the vehicle for sharing may defuse anxieties about dealing with one neighbor district. Because state systems of regional agencies assign all (or all but the largest) districts to a region, a district's ability to take advantage of sharing is not limited by the willingness of adjacent districts.

Concerns expressed about using a consortium included whether administrative costs would be greater than with direct sharing, and whether using a regional agency would create more red tape and bureaucracy.

Bringing Special Facilities to Students

Special vocational education mobile facilities are available through regional, or even statewide programs in isolated rural areas.

- **In rural Wisconsin, a van *and* instructor travel a circuit of high schools, teaching hydraulic and pneumatic equipment technology. The van, and teacher, stay at one place for nine weeks and students are drawn from a 25-mile radius. Each district pays its portion of the operating costs and instructor's salary.**
- **In Oklahoma, the state provides a similar service in the field of data processing – where technology is fast-paced and the need for the latest expensive equipment is imperative, but beyond the reach of most districts. This van stays four weeks at each high school, and does not come with an instructor. Instead a comprehensive manual, detailing operation and application of equipment, is sent ahead of time and regular high school faculty instruct.**

Developing and Distributing Materials

A regional organization may develop instruction packages, a/v materials, or coordinate use of educational technology. This provides a means for expanding services, programs, and resources without transporting students or teachers, and thus may be particularly worthwhile for rural school districts.

- **The Western Small Schools Project, and Adirondack Small Schools Project pioneered cooperative use of educational technology and coordinating resources of member schools. For example, visual materials are sent ahead, and the lecture is given over amplified telephone hookups.**
- **Oakland County Service Center in Pontiac, Michigan produces and distributes videotapes for use by local districts. It also has developed a conference call network for teachers and homebound students.**
- **A longstanding voluntary cooperative of 29 school districts – Cooperative School Districts of St. Louis Suburban Area – spends a large proportion of its budget to support educational television and other a/v programs for member districts.**

A Consortium for Gifted Students

Five school districts in suburban Minneapolis recently banded together to create the West Suburban Summer School Association, a special purpose consortium offering enrichment programs to gifted students.

Prompted by concerns over declining enrollment, financial constraints, and the opportunity available through the joint powers act of state law, the districts created a formal organization to pool resources, talents, and talented kids. A board of directors oversees program offerings and hires the director. The Hopkins district serves as financial agent and its high school, located in the middle of the 150 square mile service area, is the home base.

Enrichment programs – in areas such as math, science, foreign language – are now offered as mini-courses in the evenings and on weekends during the school year, as well as during the summer. Programs are offered to students in grades 4-12 and are attended by over 1,000 students.

A Mixed Bag of Services

Existing regional cooperatives, or service agencies, offer member districts services which may become useful in supporting other strategies.

- In Oregon, the Oregon Total Information System (OTIS) provides a variety of administrative and financial services to its 45 member districts. One of these is school scheduling – which could be used to coordinate schedules of several districts that want to offer joint programs.
- Georgia's system of shared service projects, each serving about four to seven districts, was developed to support local rural schools. It coordinates sharing of teachers or positions among districts, provides direct subject area services and inservice programs to groups of teachers, and helps in planning and developing programs. All of these services are useful to the school district with declining enrollment.
- One of the original reasons for formation of the New York State BOCES (Boards of Cooperative Education Services) system was to coordinate needs in small districts for part-time teachers, while providing the itinerate teacher full-time employment. It continues to provide this service and anticipates enlarging it, according to member district requests. The BOCES in many parts of the state have long offered half-day vocational education and special education programs for handicapped students at central locations, on a tuition basis to member districts. As conditions change, the programs may change too. One BOCES already offers half-day programs in arts and music, and one is investigating the need for languages and other advanced academic courses.
- A "Regional School Service Center," formed by six districts in northwestern Connecticut, has a shared service staff in psychological services, art, music, physical education, and French.

Sharing through a regional agency offers both stability and flexibility. If the consortium offers many services, each district can use those services that meet its needs as long as it wants to. And if one district decides to pull out of a program, it won't threaten the program for other districts.

6 *Consolidation*

Consolidation is in sharp contrast to virtually every other strategy discussed in this report. It is a permanent, nonreversible step. Once a high school has been closed and merged with another, it is unlikely that it will be opened again in the future. Those involved in planning for the high school should look carefully at enrollment projections, educational objectives, and the perceptions of local citizens of their high school. Consolidation should be considered only if there is continued expected low enrollment in the district *and* if there is strong community support.

Consolidation can take several forms. Two or more entire school districts can merge, replacing existing governing areas with a single joint district. Two or more districts can merge at the high school level only, retaining the two original districts as elementary districts and creating a third joint (or regional) high school district. The high school in one district can close and its students attend a high school in another district, keeping both districts as legal entities, but shifting administrative and program control of the high school to the receiving district. The sending district, in effect, "buys into" that high school program.

Consolidation has always been controversial and will remain so during a period of declining enrollment. Becoming a receiving district is very popular, because it increases numbers of students and size of budgets, while retaining local control of programs and not increasing local taxes. The possibility of closing a high school strikes at the heart of the community identity issue, and the role of the high school in the community. Most community residents, students, teachers, and administrators consider this the option of last resort. As one of our consortium members said, "It would be political suicide for the school board even to consider closing the high school." In rural areas the presence of a high school may have a direct relationship to the economic well-being of a small community. Often the proposed closing of a rural high school is seen as the precursor to economic decline for the town itself.

Nevertheless, it is an option to explore along with the other strategies. Even if it is clearly rejected, the school district may clarify its values and priorities, and may get a better sense of the role of the high school in the community. Serious consideration of this option will also help in evaluating alternative strategies.

Closing the high school can make sense for small districts that are close to other districts with compatible educational goals and declining enrollment. Students may have access to a much broader and better quality high school program than they could otherwise.

Let's look briefly at the different versions of consolidation:

- Merging two entire districts and creating a single new

district: If you're going to merge, you might as well go all the way and create a new district – new school board, new uniform tax rate, single administration – and jointly develop a single philosophy, curriculum, staff benefits and employment policies, etc. This, of course, also raises high levels of anxiety on all sides because somebody's tax rate will probably go up; all teachers and administrators and other staff will be uncertain about job prospects; people in both districts will worry about losing control; and so on. However, everything about the new district will be jointly decided.

- Merging districts at the high school level only, retaining two districts as elementary districts and creating a third regional high school district: This is a poor compromise, but it may be necessary if local sentiment won't allow full merger. Where you had two of everything before, you have three now – three school boards, three tax structures, three budgets, three employment policies, etc. It doesn't ease anxiety at the high school level, and leaves open the possibility of students arriving at high school with different backgrounds.
- Becoming a sending or receiving district at the high school level: This is generally warmly embraced by potential receiving districts and shunned by potential sending districts. The receiving district retains its own governance, tax and budget structures, and tells the sending district how much it has to pay per student. It retains policy and curriculum control, staff, school identity, etc. The sending district loses budget, policy, and curriculum control, and loses all staff and all school identity.

In our consortium, one school district is seriously exploring consolidation with a neighboring district. Administrators feel that it will be impossible to offer an adequate program when 9-12 enrollment drops below 400, in several years. This is a tiny district of one square mile. The adjacent district is similar in geography and population, and has compatible educational programs. Committees of citizens and administrators are now meeting to consider when consolidation might be feasible.

Consolidation No Longer Forced

Consolidation of small school districts was for a long time believed by state education officials to be the only appropriate option. State education agencies forced, encouraged with financial bonuses, or cajoled local districts to consolidate. The rationale was based on economies of scale, covering everything from purchase of materials, to administrative costs, to educational facilities and programs. Pennsylvania, for example, had 4,000 school districts in the late 1960's and has 500 now.

The rate of district consolidations has declined steeply, and most states have backed off from mandating consolidation. In part, small enrollment districts in the Western and Plains States have consolidated about as far as practical. (A district of 1,000 square miles and 300 students K-12 is not uncommon.) In part, no research has been able to show improved education results from consolidation – in fact research supports both sides. Economies have not been impressive, and

rising transportation costs make long distance travel very expensive. Most important, though, citizens of small districts, convinced of the value of local community education, have organized and become powerful politically.

A coalition in Iowa, a state with many low enrollment rural districts, was instrumental in getting the state legislature recently to change state policy from advocating consolidation. Only a year ago, the Iowa legislature passed legislation permitting schools to share teachers and programs, opening up other options which had been closed. People in suburban districts, which are small in geography and in population, tend to feel just as strongly about maintaining local districts.

Consolidation of single high school districts will probably be less frequent in the coming years, and will be limited to voluntary mergers.

Consolidation may be the best option for a small high school which feels programs will suffer irreparably with enrollment decline, and which has a nearby school that also wants to consolidate and that shares similar values about education. It may result in stronger programs for students of both districts.

Consolidation should be considered only if current trends look long term, because it is a permanent arrangement. Once a high school is closed, it probably won't reopen. Consolidation, too, has to be timed so that there is a reasonable fit between students and building.

C Strategies Using Educational and Community Institutions Outside the School System

A third major approach focuses on broadening the relationship between the high school, community residents, and community institutions. Rather than seeking partnerships with other school districts, it looks outside the school system.

A high school may significantly broaden educational opportunities to students by encouraging them to take advantage of college and university programs, internships or special study opportunities with local businesses or other institutions, or with skilled individuals in the community. Developing a resource center within the guidance department which promotes opportunities in the community would be a valuable undertaking. This could include activities and programs for which the school is willing to grant credit as well as those which would offer enrichment.

Based on experiences with our consortium, working cooperatively with colleges and universities appeals to those within the school system as a means of preserving or expanding advanced course offerings. The options for expanding clientele and working with other community institutions are less likely to appeal to school people – they seem rather radical. However, they were very appealing to community residents who do not now have direct involvement with the schools, and they can benefit both the schools and the community.

As in strategies of sharing between school districts, opportunities available to students outside the high school need to be aggressively promoted.

7 *Widen or redefine clientele*

Traditionally, the clientele of the high school has been young adults, roughly ages 14 to 18, who attend school during the day. By widening the clientele, and possibly shifting schedules, the school district may be able to retain courses that would be jeopardized, provide needed services to new people, strengthen community support, perhaps tap new income sources, and increase communication and understanding among different sectors of the community.

One version of this strategy would be to open the entire high school program, as a credit and diploma-granting program, to all community residents. For school districts which have a large number of residents who lack a high school diploma, this could significantly increase the pool of students. In some states, financial aid is given for students enrolled, regardless of age.

A large part of the adult population is not available during the day, however. Expansion of the high school program into evening hours is an option which not only increases opportunities for adults, but for students of traditional age as well.

A second version of this strategy would be to open individual courses to adult students who don't want or need credit, but want to take a course. Adults might take business, language, art, or anything else, for any number of personal reasons. Districts might open courses on a space-available basis for free, or for a tuition charge.

A neighbor of mine, a woman in her fifties, has a new office job with a chemical equipment manufacturer. She told me she would love to enroll in a high school chemistry class to understand better the work of her new firm. She said, "The chemistry I learned in college, way back then, is nothing like what they teach the kids today. I wouldn't be scared to take a high school course the way I would be to take a college course."

This type of request is being put to schools from community residents more often these days. It is a strategy which any school can implement easily.

A third version would have the school district seeking out educational needs in the community to fill which might not get filled otherwise. These might include English as a Second Language, vocational training under CETA or other federal job-training programs, senior citizen seminar programs, and so on. New programs might also widen horizons for current students.

This strategy raised concerns among all constituencies represented in the consortium – students, teachers, administrators, and parents. One concern was about how well adults and "regular" high school students would get along. Both parents and students felt that students would feel awkward in the presence of adults. ("Imagine taking a

course with your mother's best friend.") Teachers were concerned about *their* relationship with adults, and about having adults observe their treatment of students. They were afraid they would be criticized and "not respected" by other adults, and that it would be difficult to give an adult a poor grade. They said they would feel funny about disciplining students in front of other adults.

Also in the consortium, however, were a few people who *had* experience in this sort of situation. These people felt there were real advantages to age mixing – that it opened up real communication between adults and students that is much needed in our society. One teacher said students in her class acted more grown up (less gum chewing and passing of notes), and adults were highly motivated and were clearly there to learn. If anything, the challenge the teacher felt by the presence of adults resulted in a better class for everybody.

The city consortium district already operates an extensive program of the first version. The high school Extended Day Program runs from 4:00 to 10:00 p.m., is open free to all residents under age 21 (including day students), and on a tuition basis to anyone else. It is a regular high school program, taught for the most part by teachers from the regular daytime program who are "moonlighting." Extended Day students can participate in all extra curricular high school activities. The program serves young people who have dropped out, who have to repeat classes or wish to accelerate, and people who work during the day. Over 250 people are enrolled and the program is self-supporting.

One of the suburban districts is interested in investigating this strategy. The school board has already received at least one request from a community adult wanting to take a course. (The board turned it down, because it hadn't developed a policy yet.) The superintendent feels there may be an unmet need in the community for courses in the latest word-processing techniques and equipment – for people seeking to reenter the job market or seeking to upgrade their skills. Offering such a program to all community residents may make it easier for the district to justify buying new equipment for the business department. The rural district has recently adopted a policy to allow adult students, at least in part due to its participation in the consortium.

Opening the Doors

- **The Northern Westchester BOCES vocational and technical center, in New York, which provides training to high school students from member districts, has opened all programs to adults if space is available. Adults pay the same tuition as a school district does, and are enrolled in almost all programs.**
- **Many districts are opening evening adult school programs to high school students, and daytime high school programs to adults, expanding their clientele in the process.**
- **An unanticipated result of the Las Vegas evening high school program (see strategy no. 2) was that *40 percent* of the students had not been in the day program.**

Serving All Ages

Some high schools are developing programs for both ends of the age spectrum and benefitting everybody.

- High schools in Harbor Springs, Michigan and Monroe, Connecticut turned over a small amount of space for senior citizen centers and invited the older people to use all high school facilities.

Initial wariness on the parts of both old people and high school students has given way to friendships and joint projects. A retired journalist and several retired farmers are active in school newspaper and agricultural classes.

- High schools in Staples, Minnesota and Evanston Township, Illinois operate daycare/nursery school centers, and high school students in child study programs get credit for helping run them.

Filling Special Educational Needs

In areas of the country with large immigrant populations, school districts can provide bilingual, bicultural or English as a Second Language programs to adults as well as regular students. Districts can identify other special needs too.

- Grand Rapids, Michigan school system works with numerous community agencies to identify and meet special needs. As a result, the district offers programs in sign language, driver education for adults in several foreign languages and English, parenting, applied gerontology for geriatric nurses aides and others who work with elderly people, etc.
- Union Township, New Jersey has a broad program of daytime senior citizen seminars.
- Lakewood, New Jersey has high school equivalency programs in both English and Spanish.
- Great Neck, New York school district greatly expanded adult education programs. (They are housed in three surplus schools.) In 1978, K-12 enrollment was 7,000; 12,000 students enrolled in adult classes.

Going to the People

Some school districts are aggressively marketing high school completion, remedial, and basic skills programs to local business and industry, or taking these programs to nontraditional locations.

- Los Angeles school system provides basic skills and special skills training, under contract, to employees of industry, government, and business. Daytime classes are held at business locations, nighttime classes at schools.
- Grand Rapids offers pre-high school and high school completion programs at industrial and business locations, churches, nursing homes, jails, apartment buildings, and community centers. In Michigan, state aid is provided for all students who have not graduated from high school, regardless of age.

Increased interest in education as a lifelong pursuit, whether for job-related purposes or personal enrichment, and increasing proportions of school district residents

without children in school may prompt school districts to widen the clientele they serve.

8 *Work cooperatively with colleges and universities*

Cooperative arrangements with colleges and universities offer high schools a means for maintaining, improving, or increasing advanced or specialized courses which may be jeopardized by declining enrollment, whether or not they are offered in the high school building. In addition, special services, such as guidance and career counseling, or remedial basic skills, can be provided in cooperation with colleges.

Use of correspondence courses is an option readily accessible to any district, and several such programs are well established. Because they are prepackaged units, it is easy for school district administrators and board to judge what is offered and agree to accept completion towards the high school diploma. Often a high school teacher supervises the work, which is otherwise an independent study project for students.

In some parts of the country, colleges broadcast courses on television or radio, with written support materials and exams available at a fee.

Students may also take courses at a college if there are colleges nearby which are willing, or, college courses, taught by college faculty, may be housed within the high school. This option makes sense if there is excess space in the high school, or if space is available in the evenings; if there is sufficient demand in the community to offer courses (if there were enough just from the high school you wouldn't have a problem); and if there is an interested college.

In order to make sense for the college, usually a number of courses have to be offered so that the high school becomes in effect a "branch campus." Also, the college will want to offer courses *it* wants, so there may be only partial overlap with high school needs. This arrangement allows the high school to broaden its role in the community through loan or rental of its facilities, without taking responsibility or developing expanded programs itself.

If high school faculty become qualified, there's a possibility they could teach both high school and college courses under this arrangement.

This strategy provides a school district with the possibility of "offering" advanced courses for which it does not have qualified faculty, or in which very few students are interested. It offers more structure for students than does independent study.

"Correspondence" Courses

- **Under the auspices of the Texas Small Schools Project, small high schools in rural areas were able to expand course offerings through correspondence courses. Often, the schools had regularly scheduled study hours, during which teachers were available to help students in these courses.**
- **Washington State University and Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory jointly developed a num-**

ber of programmed, audio/visual "instructional units" for use by small secondary schools. Companion study guides help teachers with little background in the subject area to assist students.

- The State University of New York at Binghamton developed several college-level courses on audio cassettes. Each course can be rented by high schools. Students take a final exam prepared and graded by the university.

College Courses at the High School

- Syracuse University, in New York, has one of the most extensive programs targeted at offering advanced courses to students in high schools. Courses developed by Syracuse faculty are taught by high school teachers, after a special summer training workshop at the university. Students receive college and high school credit. Over 4,000 students in 60 high schools in New York participate annually.
- Eight faculty members of C.W. Post Center for Long Island University regularly teach a special first-year college program to a select group of students at Chaminade High School.
- College faculty from the Community College of the Fingerlakes, in upstate New York, teach courses at BOCES centers and students get college credit and high school credit. (The BOCES centers themselves are regional centers for member school districts.)

High School Kids in College

As well as arrangements which allow individual high school students to take courses at nearby colleges, there are more organized programs in place.

- Spokane Community College, in Washington, and four area high schools joined to create the Cooperative Occupational Program. Juniors and seniors from the four schools attend courses at the college in subjects such as electronics, dental assisting, and auto mechanics.
- The Staten Island Cooperative Consortium in New York City offers an extraordinarily wide-ranging variety of educational opportunities among 4 colleges, 16 high schools, and 70 elementary and junior high schools. Under one part of these arrangements, several hundred high school students take courses at the colleges.

Special Services

- Two high schools in New Mexico draw on doctoral candidates from the nearby state university to enrich guidance and counseling services. The graduate students visit high schools weekly, and lead field trips for high school students to industry, technical and nursing schools, and an airbase, as part of a career exploration program.
- Many colleges in the City University of New York system have developed reading clinics, and other basic skills and remedial programs at local high schools.
- Colorado Mountain College and Aspen, Colorado

school district jointly constructed an arts center. Among other cooperative agreements, college faculty teach welding, photography, and ceramics to both high school students and adults.

Close Cooperation by Intent

- **In Pennsylvania, the statewide system of community colleges receives one-third of its funding from local school districts (one-third from tuition, one-third from the state). A 1977 survey of community colleges reported that all have high school students enrolled part-time, and all plan new programs in consultation with local districts. Roughly one-third have college faculty teaching in high schools, share special facilities and equipment with high schools, and have developed four-year occupational programs – the first two years at the high school and the second two years at the college.**
- **In Iowa, one of the legislated functions of community colleges is to assist local high schools. Iowa Central Community College is a catalyst in organizing voluntary consortia of rural districts to promote sharing. Universities in Iowa have developed programs specifically to train teachers for small rural districts.**

9 *Work cooperatively with other community agencies, businesses, and individuals*

This last strategy covers a wide range of alternatives from using community people as enrichment instructors, to contracting with local businesses or agencies to provide programs *for* the high school or the reverse (the high school contracting to provide programs *to* local groups), to renting high school space to community groups and service agencies.

The educational opportunities presented by this strategy depend, of course, on the resources within the community. Many of the examples cited are from large city districts where the wealth of resources is extraordinary. The same principles of seeking out community talent and structuring ways to take advantage of local resources can be applied anywhere – few high schools can legitimately claim to have exhausted this area. Nor is this strategy limited to conditions of enrollment decline. However, if declining enrollment threatens to limit high school programs, this strategy may become an important element in maintaining comprehensive educational opportunities for students.

Bringing Community Resources to Students

- **John Dewey High School in Brooklyn, New York offers courses in music theory and practice, taught by young composers, and arranged by the New York Guild for Composers.**

Sending Students Out to the Community

- **Minneapolis schools, through the Minneapolis Urban Arts Program, are taking advantage of the wealth of artistic resources in the community to enrich the school art program. Operating on a trimester system, junior and senior high school students enroll in work-**

shops which meet daily for one to three hours. Workshops are taught by artists at their studios – Guthrie Theater, Minneapolis Dance Theater, School of Music, Minneapolis Institute of Art – and students receive art credits from the high school. Special long-term projects are available for advanced students, but the coordinator stresses that the program is available to all students. Although most communities don't have the scope of resources that Minneapolis has, such a program can be developed using resources which are available.

Work-study, community service, and career programs which use the community as the place of learning may become a major component of high school studies.

- At Greeley High School in Cumberland Center, Maine students work in the community for periods ranging from 1 to 13 weeks. They spend four days a week on "the job" and one day a week at the high school working with a "learning coordinator." Each student completes an individual set of reports and assignments, based on his or her job location, and receives school credit.
- The Executive High School internship program operates in Philadelphia, New York City, and Buffalo. Outstanding high school juniors and seniors take a one semester sabbatical to serve as assistants to senior officials in government, business, community agencies, and cultural and educational institutions. Students receive credit from their high school.

Joint Services and Projects

Students may engage in real work projects of benefit to their communities.

- At John Dewey High School, marine biology students conducted water quality tests for coastal communities and testified at hearings.
- In Staples, Minnesota high school students, faculty, and community resource people jointly developed curriculum and wrote 30 "learning packages" for a nearby environmental center.
- At Manual High School in Denver, students set up real corporations and run them. One group got a $10,000 contract to design miniparks in the city; another publishes the newsletter for the urban renewal agency.

A second theme running through this strategy is that the high school may be able to broaden its role as a community institution through cooperative arrangements with other service agencies. Again, this is not a strategy limited to conditions of declining enrollment, or to single high school districts, but it may become feasible with fewer students.

The motivations and benefits are multifaceted. In terms of services to teenagers, schools districts are under pressure from two directions – one, to concentrate more narrowly on the three R's, and two, to broaden the role of the high school to include job, drug and other personal counselling services, recreation programs, etc. At the

same time, agencies which provide a broader range of services may benefit from gaining access to students in the school, or using specialized school facilities. Another motivation relates to greater demands from the majority of citizens who do *not* have students in school, that they, too, receive some benefit from school tax dollars, at least access to special facilities such as gyms and shops. A third motivation is that many services and facilities – such as libraries – are similar regardless of the user, and should not be needlessly duplicated if joint ventures can produce better results for all users. And, finally, if declining enrollment produces excess space in the high school, it might as well get used for other community purposes which may also benefit high school students, and might contribute to operating costs of the facility, freeing that money for program use.

Joint Provision of Community Services

- **The small community of Olney, Texas combined the public library, high school library, and three elementary school libraries, and created a combined library governing board. Costs and salaries are shared equally by the city and the school board.**
- **When the high school runs a senior citizen center or daycare center (see strategy no. 7), it's not only providing an educational setting for students, but is also providing a community service.**
- **The Grand Rapids Community Education Program works with over 150 community agencies to plan programs jointly – Community Education runs wheelchair games for the physically handicapped, preretirement seminars, daycare, etc.**

Many Community Education Programs across the country interweave resources and services of municipal and private agencies, schools, and community residents. The high school is rarely singled out, but is one of many sites used.

School as Community Center

If space becomes available, high school facilities may be shared with other agencies or organizations, broadening the function of the building to a community center.

- **In St. Paul, Minnesota a high school was converted to a junior high school with lower enrollment, resulting in surplus space. This space was converted, and additional space was also constructed for use by the county employment, visiting nurses, a health center, among others. An adjacent city park was renovated for school sports as well as city recreation programs, and the recreation department also uses facilities in the school.**
- **The Thomas Jefferson Center in Arlington, Virginia was originally built for joint use as a recreation center and junior high school. The game room and canteen, performing arts complex and indoor field house are used by students and community residents of all ages. With declining enrollment, the recreation department is taking over space no longer needed for the school, and increasing its services to the community.**

Obviously, communities differ widely in the resources available, in numbers and kinds of organizations and services, in the need by others for space, and so on. The applicability of this strategy depends on an assessment of community needs and resources, and the degree of overlapping concerns among all community institutions, including the high school.

In sum

Many strategies are available for handling declining enrollment in single high school districts. Some strategies stress working within the existing system, some working with other school districts, and some working with other institutions and community resources.

To get a better understanding of how these strategies might be applied to a specific case, let's illustrate how each might be used in one program area – instrumental music.

1 Relax, and approach normality

Already more qualified students want to be in band and orchestra than you can accommodate. So with fewer students, you'll be able to take a larger percentage, and will have greater participation. You may even be able to develop the jazz band you've wanted. That's great!

2 Make changes within the existing school structure

With declining enrollment in a few years, you won't be able to "field" a full orchestra or band. So, instead of pushing big ensembles, you'll shift gears to small ensemble work – brass quintets, chamber orchestra, etc., and emphasize instruments that can be played in smaller groups. You may have to go to a part-time teacher.

3 Reorganize district grade structure

By bringing the ninth grade into the high school, you *will* be able to have a full orchestra. The quality may not be as good – it won't be as challenging to advanced students. (So, for them, you might consider some other options, too.)

4 Share programs/services/staff with other school districts directly

You co-sponsor an orchestra and band with another high school. In fact, the same teacher works with students in each district part-time, and everybody gathers at one school (or alternately each week) for large practices twice a week.

5 *Share programs/services/staff with other school districts through a regional consortium or educational service agency*

Your immediately neighboring districts don't want to have joint orchestras (they're big enough, or they look down their noses at your musicians, or they only do ensemble work). But you're a member of a regional consortium and some of the other districts have the same problem. The consortium decides to sponsor an orchestra. So, those of your students who want orchestra go to a central campus for practice sessions.

6 *Consolidation*

By consolidating two high schools you've got enough students to make an orchestra, and have a full-time music program. The only question is which music teacher to keep.

7 *Widen or redefine clientele*

Since you've got the instruments and you need more players, you choose to let anybody in the community who wants to study an instrument borrow it for lessons, practice, and join the orchestra. You may even move rehearsal time to evenings. In effect, you're creating a community orchestra, with a core of high school students.

8 *Work cooperatively with colleges and universities*

Some of your advanced students join the orchestra of a local college.

9 *Work cooperatively with other community agencies, businesses, and individuals*

Maybe there already *is* a community orchestra and your students join *that*. Practice sessions are held in the high school.

Part

3

Common Concerns and Issues

The previous numbered page in the original document was blank

We're in opposition to cutting our education. We don't want options like, you can cut this instead of that. We don't want our education cut.
– high school student

We take the stand quite strongly that volunteers should not replace professional staff.
– teacher

Although there would be many benefits from bringing seventh and eighth graders into the high school, we feel the larger age span may pose some problems for the younger students. There are different opinions on that, but if they are real to some people, they become problems.
– superintendent

Consolidation is really in the air. But it's consolidate with Johnny over here on the left, not with Susie over there on the right. And God help us if it ends up with Susie on the right.
– superintendent

Too many times society expects volunteers – and particularly women – to take over the role that society should be funding. When libraries were closing in elementary schools, had there not been mothers coming in to fill the gap, the libraries would have been closed.
– parent

Declining enrollment raises anxiety, and each of the strategies we explored in Part Two of this report causes concern among at least some constituents of the single high school. Many of these issues are common to several strategies, and will have to be confronted when evaluating options.

One reason for convening our consortium was to probe concerns and issues, to find which were common to all districts, and to identify those of special concern to rural districts, large high schools, or other special categories. One reason for having a wide range of people from each consortium district participate – teachers, high school students, parents, administrators, school board members, community residents with no children in high school, and teacher union representatives – was to probe concerns and issues from each of their perspectives.

In this part of the report we explore the issues which surfaced in the consortium, and others which are likely to surface in any single high school district trying to plan intelligently – and rationally – and passionately for enrollment decline.

The role of the high school as a community institution

From our consortium meetings it is clear that all constituent groups feel the high school *is* an important community institution. However, there was no consensus on what role the high school should play within the larger context of the community today, much less tomorrow.

The high school is important

The high school is important to "community identity" – a phrase which is incredibly difficult to define concretely. The high school is one of the threads which holds people together, and which is taken for granted until it's threatened. Like a post office address or a telephone exchange, it's not something to think about all the time. From a logical point of view it shouldn't make any difference what post office address or telephone prefix you have, so long as you receive letters and phone calls. But it *does* make a difference – people fight mightily over a proposed post office closing.

The high school, as the flagship of the school system, is important as an institution which is locally controlled. Despite state and federal guidelines, mandates, and dollars, the school system is still perceived to be – and is – a local institution. Municipal government is the only other major institution under comparable local control, but its services are often not nearly as tangible, nor its physical facilities as visible, as those of the schools.

In reviewing strategies, the most numerous and strongly expressed concerns regarded the loss of control – loss of control over priorities and directions, curriculum, staffing policies, and buildings.

In the consortium, parents of high school students also felt that a high quality high school is important for maintaining the prestige of the community and property values. They felt it is crucial in attracting new residents. This concern was *not* shared by residents without children in school, since they choose to live in the community for other reasons.

But its role is murky

All consortium participants agreed that the proper role of the high school is unclear, that it is in need of clear definition, and that the community as a whole must provide a clear set of expectations. Representatives of constituent groups, however, had different perspectives on the degree to which the high school should be a "community" institution.

Parents expressed a desire to keep costs down, and worried that schools are trying to do too much, and are spreading money too thinly. Their message seems to be, back off the wider social role and put the money into the education of 14- to 18-year-olds. They wanted to be sure that any wider community uses be self-supporting.

Residents without children in school want some results from their tax dollars that they, too, can use. They look at the physical facilities and resources of the high school as public community property, which ought to be available for general community use by right. They are troubled by the proprietary view of school buildings which they feel school administrators hold. And they are concerned about getting people to think seriously about radical changes, not mere adjustments to the existing system.

Social service agencies with broad concerns about young people see the high school as the logical delivery place for other needed services, too, since that is where the young people are.

Students see the high school as *their* institution. They are concerned about maintaining whatever it is, and tended to see change as taking something away. They feel like they've waited a lot of years to reach the high school, and they want their turn. They were the most traditional of consortium members.

School board members and administrators are struggling to sort out competing demands and establish priorities, in a time of particularly limited financial resources. They are especially frustrated by suggestions that the school system take responsibility for broader services to students and community residents, without any additional funding, when they already feel they have too little money to provide the educational services they want to offer high school students.

Teachers feel that the educational offerings of the high school need to be reexamined. Their point is that the high school should be preparing students to take a responsible and productive role in society, and they are not sure that the high school of today is performing that role well.

The comprehensive high school

The nature of the educational program for the high school also has to be rethought in light of declining enrollment and limited resources. The goals of your high school program need to be clearly stated.

Within the consortium, concerns focused on the concept of a "comprehensive" high school, and the continued ability to meet community expectations that were formed during a period of growth. All participants felt that their high school (from the largest – 2,700, to the smallest – 500) now offers a comprehensive program, and were worried

that it might become less comprehensive. Obviously, the term "comprehensive" covers a wide variety of conditions. Frequently, the notion of comprehensiveness was tied to the *number* of courses available.

The community as a whole will have to examine what a comprehensive education means in coming years, whether the high school can be "truly" comprehensive, and whether a comprehensive program is possible through sharing with other districts or making use of other resources. As one participant said, "We may have to think the unthinkable."

High school faculty

Many of the strategies discussed in Part Two of this report require or suggest new roles and expectations for the teaching staff. During the era of rapid growth, teachers became more specialized in the subject areas in which they taught. Even if they were qualified in several areas, they tended to teach a single subject. During the era of decline, they may have to become generalists. Changes may include different configurations of classes and teaching roles, requiring new skills.

Faculty members of the consortium were of course very concerned about examining implications of strategies for themselves and their fellow teachers. Their greatest concern was that they be involved in structuring new programs and curriculum, and in planning for new staff responsibilities. They were also concerned that required changes be known enough in advance to allow for smooth transitions, acquisition of new skills, and so on.

Some school district administrators and board members, from districts with strong teacher unions, expressed concern that teachers would fight any changes, and that issues of management prerogatives would form the basis for bitter negotiations. Others were concerned about how to make changes in a humane manner. Union representatives in the consortium, however, recognized that changes would be necessary, and were only concerned that they be made with active involvement of teachers as well as administrators.

Student consortium members were most concerned about retaining individual faculty members. They wanted to be assured that good teachers, with whom they have looked forward to taking courses, would still be there, and evaluated all strategies in this light. They were not particularly worried about changes in faculty roles and responsibilities.

Multiple competencies and new skills

A district will gain flexibility in developing strategies and adjusting to changing conditions if the subject area competence of the teaching staff is broad. Because the number of teachers needed in the near future will probably be smaller, in many schools this means developing new areas of competence among current staff members and, when vacancies occur, recruiting new teachers with multiple competencies.

Competence is not the same as possession of a teaching certificate, particularly if the certificate was earned many years before, and the person has not taught in the subject

area recently. If a person is certified in "science," but has taught only chemistry for a number of years, that person may not teach biology or earth science well without refresher training. Further, a teacher's interests may have changed over time. Arbitrary assignment of teaching areas, based on old or broad areas of certification, may lead to inferior teaching of students and faculty resentment. This concern was voiced by both teachers and students in the consortium.

Achieving multiple competency, then, may require refresher training for some people – perhaps through inservice programs, teacher centers, independent study, cooperation with other districts, or college courses. It may require taking a course of study in a new area – during the summer months, evenings, at local colleges, etc.

Achieving multiple competency in high school faculty requires a plan and time. Faculty members need to help develop a plan, and need to know exactly in what areas they should seek new or refresher training. It requires knowing the strengths and interests of the staff and juggling them so that, as a whole, all areas are covered.

Changes in the nature and structure of the high school program in the next few years may lead to changes in the traditional roles of the teaching staff and a need for new teaching skills (not just subject matter). Teachers may be doing more tutorial or small seminar work, may be supervising independent study or outside studies in community settings, or may be giving some large lecture courses. Teaching several levels of language in the same classroom/language lab, or supervising biology and chemistry labs in the same room may require some new skills; so, too, may bringing in more community adults as resource people, or integrating adults and teenagers in the same classes.

Job configurations

Some subjects may be best taught by a person in the high school only a few days a week. The school district then has the choice of looking for someone to fill a part-time position (or changing an existing full-time post to part-time), or "buying" a piece of somebody's time.

A part-time position often does not offer many fringe benefits, nor does it traditionally carry tenure. Therefore, it is less expensive for the district. It is also, for the same reason, less attractive to a potential staff person, and becomes a harder position to fill. Some school districts now provide full or partial tenure and pension accrual, or other benefits to part-time employees. The rural district recently granted tenure to a half-time teacher after three half-time years, the equivalent of 1½ years of experience. Several other alternatives are available, too.

One alternative is to investigate job sharing between teachers in the same district who really want to work part-time. Some changes in benefit and tenure regulations to allow proportional credit may be necessary to make the alternative attractive.

A second alternative is to share teachers among districts. If done directly by two or more districts, it is administratively simplest for one district to have a contract with the teacher, and for other districts to reimburse a proportion of the total cost of the teacher. The pay scale,

fringe benefit package, and working conditions of the "host" district become the conditions of employment. If several districts jointly hire a teacher, discrepancies in employment conditions in those districts must somehow be resolved.

A third alternative is to contract for part-time services from a consortium, intermediate district, or education service agency, which acts as the hiring agency and broker. One drawback of this approach is that an itinerant teacher often feels at home nowhere, and runs the risk of not being considered a "real" staff member anywhere.

Still another alternative is to share a staff position with some other community agency. This may be easier in some subject areas (e.g. physical education, art) where similar talents are needed – for example by a recreation department or senior citizen center. The person would have to meet job qualifications for both positions (e.g. teacher certification and civil service). An advantage of this alternative is that the person would be working full-time in the same community, although under different auspices and for different members of the community.

Whichever alternative is pursued, it is important to establish clear lines of responsibility, and a clear understanding of any duties beyond the classroom. All agreements need to be put in writing. A district will want to be sure that part-time staff are a small portion of the entire faculty, so that a core of full-time people remain.

Nontraditional ways of securing instructional services may include, for example, contracting with a computer company for high school students to attend its 10-week introductory programming course for new employees; bringing local artists, writers, and lawyers into the school for guest lectures, tutorials, or seminar courses; placing a student part-time in a trade apprenticeship program; or having a student work in a local business office or a museum's research lab one day a week.

High school faculty may resent such "intrusions" unless it is clear that the skills available in this way are skills which the school cannot provide. In addition, to ensure quality and continuity, and to meet state requirements, members of the high school faculty will probably have to supervise and review students' work.

Parents, too, were concerned that volunteers be used to *supplement* school staff. They were sensitive that volunteers might be exploited as an economy measure, to staff programs which the school ought to be funding.

Reducing size of staff

Reducing the number of faculty members or administrators is the stickiest of problems, and one with which teachers, administrators, and school board members must wrestle. It is particularly unwieldy because of the complex ways in which tenure is granted by subject area, while seniority is earned by years of teaching in the district. State laws and regulations, and teacher contracts are in need of revamping in this regard.

All members of the consortium expressed concern over finding ways to reduce the size of staff which were fair and humane.

The rural district has been able to reduce staff in areas where needed through attrition only. It has sought, so far unsuccessfully, to fill open positions with teaches who are certified in several needed areas. Also the school board has taken a strong position, that when it hires a teacher, it expects the position to remain. It has so far refused to hire anybody that it knows will have to be fired in a few years. The board feels this is a critical distance to ensure good morale in a small school.

Other consortium districts have not been able to use attrition as the only means of reducing staff. They have had to "let go" (very few could bring themselves to say "fire") nontenured teachers. One school district in Illinois has reported success with a strategy of encouraging teachers to take unlimited leaves of absence, with a guarantee that their tenured status and level of seniority would remain intact, and that they could return at the beginning of any year, with 90-day written notice. Apparently, this policy has encouraged teachers to explore new areas of interest, and try new careers, without giving up the security which tenure and seniority has conferred upon them.

Early retirement programs, developed when declining enrollment hit the elementary grade levels, are also being used at the high school.

All consortium members expressed concern over the lack of young teachers and the energy they bring. Reports from around the country note, among other side effects, that high schools are having greater difficulty finding coaches for athletic teams, who have traditionally been young faculty members.

Administrators, teachers, and board members all felt it would become increasingly important to support continued professional development of older faculty members – by creating inservice programs, using teacher centers, allowing time off, or other means of rekindling excitement.

Responsibilities

Responsibility for assessing staff needs, and planning and implementing staff training and retraining should be shared by the school administration and the school staff.

Once there has been a mutual assessment of strengths, weaknesses, and future needs, staff and administration need to identify criteria for continued employment; identify, which teachers will need additional certification or refresher training in which subject areas; and identify what new teaching skills will be needed for changing roles.

Inservice training may be subsidized by the district, organized by the faculty, or teacher centers may provide training. Teachers may be required to find and pay for their own additional training, or districts may subsidize retraining in whole or in part. Some of the schedule changes presented in Part Two of this report may provide time for getting new skills during the school year with minimal disruption to the school calendar or to personal lives.

The school board and administration have the responsibility to let people know what's needed in time to do something about it; to let those people who won't be needed know far enough ahead of time for them to make alternate plans; to allow faculty members, as full partners, to have

some choice and control of their futures. Likewise the faculty has the responsibility to help shoulder the burden of change – to equip themselves to meet needs; to see that needs are covered equitably; and to let administrators and boards know of their plans in time for them to act.

High school space and facilities

At the high school, at least in single high school districts, surplus space is not as overriding an issue in enrollment decline as it so often is at the elementary school level. However, changes in program offerings, structure, and schedule of the high school may require changes in the existing high school building. If more students use community facilities, local colleges, or travel to neighboring schools or to off-site centers for school work, surplus or underused space may in fact be generated. Grade restructuring or school consolidation will result in a surplus building, either a high school in one district, or a junior high school in the same district. Planning for alternative uses should start early.

Consortium districts were not yet concerned about facility issues within the high school. They were still experiencing, or looking forward to experiencing, the relief from crowded conditions which marked the boom years. Of the two consortium districts that are reorganizing grade structures within the district, one is converting a surplus junior high school into a community center, and one is seeking to sell an old school.

Facility changes within the high school may be necessary to support any of many new program configurations. Some of these are identified below.

- More varied class sizes – smaller classes or seminars will need smaller seminar rooms and perhaps different furnishings; large classes may require a new lecture hall.
- More tutorials and independent study – more conference areas; small study rooms or cubicles where an individual's materials can be kept conveniently.
- More flexible scheduling – places where both students and teachers can go, when not in scheduled classes, to make good use of their time. These might include study rooms, as above, lounges, or any necessary changes in facilities to allow a person to independently use physical exercise areas, language labs, art studios, or science labs. If the building is open more hours, some changes may be necessary to accommodate this.
- Combined classes in one room, for example, several levels of a language, biology and chemistry labs combined – modifications to existing facilities, maybe expansion, maybe consolidation or rearrangement.
- Sharing programs with other schools via specializing in different program areas – may need to upgrade facilities in area of specialization; may no longer need facilities in other areas; may swap equipment.
- Sharing space with other community agencies or organizations – probably need to renovate for their needs (e.g. offices, locker rooms for community and student use); access and security of building, depending on hours of use.

In addition to renovations needed to make the high school work for new arrangements, school districts may

have to invest some money to rejuvenate a tired high school environment.

Scheduling

Many of the strategies require rethinking traditional high school schedules, and developing alternatives. Even within the traditional framework, and a fairly large school, as enrollment declines and there are fewer sections per course, it will be increasingly difficult to schedule each student for his or her selected program of courses.

Consortium districts had not yet really grappled with the issue of scheduling in a systematic way. Some were discussing the merits and drawbacks of the seven-, eight-, or nine-period day as it affected flexibility on the one hand, and the number of study halls on the other. Many were wary of sharing strategies which require transporting students to other schools or locations for one course, because they didn't make sense within the standard structure of the school day.

Thorough reevaluation of the time structure of the school day, week, and year is a radical undertaking, because it calls for reevaluation of the entire high school program. Nevertheless, this kind of from-the-ground-up examination may be most beneficial in the long run.

How long should a class meeting be for different kinds of subjects, and how frequently should classes meet? Could a literature course meet once or twice a week for two-hour seminars, with independent reading and writing in between? Should foreign language study include 30 minutes of daily language lab drill – and can that be scheduled independently for each student? Does an art studio course require use of a studio for three hours at a time to be most worthwhile?

Is the five-day week, from 8:30 to 3:30, nine-month year, from September to June, the best schedule for high school students? Should all courses be taught for a semester or a full year? If your district has developed "mini-courses" for the winter doldrums, what's your evaluation? Does the schedule of a senior in high school have to resemble that of a freshman?

As each district explores and evaluates strategies which call for sharing among districts – possibly transporting students to another school or central location – it will have to examine scheduling. Moving a student to another school for a single 45-minute class, five times a week, may be a waste of time; even if the two schools could agree on the beginning and ending time of the 45-minute period. Larger blocks of time will facilitate sharing. Similarly, if sharing involves teachers travelling to several schools, schedules may need to be changed to allow best use of the teacher for a full day or a half-day.

Those strategies which involve greater use of community resources and greater involvement with local colleges, whether students go outside to use resources or those resources are brought into the school, also require scheduling flexibility. For example, if a student spends one day a week elsewhere, other course work has to be scheduled in four days at the school. The schedules of other community organizations are less likely to be compatible with the tra-

ditional school schedule than are the schedules of two school districts.

Scheduling is an issue at two levels, the policy level and the operational level. It should be addressed at the policy level first – what sort of schedules best support the educational programs? Then the operational problems should be tackled. Strategies which are otherwise appealing should not be eliminated on the basis of scheduling difficulties alone.

Transportation

The issue of transportation is raised in all of the sharing options, those involving sharing with other school districts, and those involving sharing with other institutions and groups.

There are really two questions: 1. How do you decide *whom* to transport? 2. Who is responsible for providing transportation?

Who moves?

When does it make sense to transport a teacher or outside person or program to the school, and when does it make sense to transport students away from the school to another school, college, or community institution?

The first thing to consider is facilities. If special facilities or equipment, which are available in only one location, are needed for the program, then that location is the place to hold the program. Other aspects of a place may be important, too, such as the experience of being in a museum, or on a job site, or talking with college students.

The second thing to consider is the number of people involved in a program. If a minimum number of people is required, and that number cannot be generated in one school, then it may be necessary to move students. For example, if not enough students are learning to play musical instruments to make a full orchestra, yet an orchestra is wanted, then students will have to gather in one place to practice. (If both schools have all instruments, then which place to gather is not important and could even be rotated.)

On the other hand, if the number of students at a single high school is sufficient for a program (a seminar or class), and the facilities are adequate, it would make more sense to bring a teacher or other resource person *to* the school. Or, if there is sufficient space to accommodate a resident artist, or daycare center, or a series of community college courses, and if there is good reason for that "outside" group to move into the building, a whole program might, in effect, be brought to the high school. High school students could take advantage of it along with other community people.

The third thing to consider is distance/time/cost. How far is it between places? How much time does it take to get there? How many people would be moving and how often? Do you have the equipment and personnel? How much will it cost? What other alternatives are possible at or less than this cost?

Unless there is good reason to transport students, it is certainly easier to transport a single teacher. But the teacher really has to stay for half- or full-day increments,

or most of his or her time will be spent in a car (again depending on distance).

Whose responsibility?

If several school districts independently hire the same teacher part-time, transportation costs are the responsibility of the teacher. If they jointly hire a person, any travel during the day ought to be reimbursed, although providing the means for transportation might be a job requirement. If a teacher is required to report to a different school each morning, the cost of that transportation is the teacher's responsibility.

As far as the transportation of students, we feel that if something is being offered *as part of the high school program*, then the school district should assume responsibility for seeing that students can get where they have to, and for footing the bill. The school district must actively encourage students to take advantage of opportunities away from the school. Too often shared programs that require student transportation flounder because schools funnel kids only into programs at the home site.

If, however, something away from the school is not considered part of the program then the district is not responsible. For example, if advanced foreign language study is offered as part of the high school program, but takes place at a local college, then it would be up to the school district to be sure students can get there. If it's not billed as part of the program, but an enterprising student arranges to attend a class at the college, and the high school agrees to grant credit, then the district may not have responsibility.

If students are to be transported between schools as part of a direct sharing program or part of a consortium arrangement, transportation itself might be cooperatively provided.

Working with neighboring districts or other institutions

Six of the nine strategies presented include sharing. Sharing with other districts or other institutions, particularly program sharing, often raises concerns about local control, program quality, accountability and responsibility, political unacceptability, fear of consolidation, and concern for district identity.

School districts are at least in the same business. Administrators share common understandings, work under common state requirements for teacher certification and program content, and so on. Sharing with institutions or community groups which have different missions, different criteria for judging staff, or different clientele requires more time and effort for coordination.

Program quality

School districts have often engaged in cooperative or shared programs during periods of enrollment stability or enrollment increase, without causing great concern. For the most part, these programs – such as education of handicapped children or specialized vocational education for high school students – obviously provide increased opportunity

for the students who take part. Often they require special facilities (automotive or metalworking shops, a simulated beauty salon), special equipment, or specially trained staff (physical therapists, journeyman craftsmen), which a single district can't justify hiring full-time. Many of these programs were created jointly in the first place; they did not replace existing programs.

Programs which might be shared during a time of enrollment decline differ in significant ways. They may be programs which high schools *already* offer and are proud of, for which high schools *already* have facilities and equipment, and *already* have qualified staff. If people are satisfied with what they already have, they will be wary of change.

This leads to a caveat about development of shared programs during enrollment decline:

Programs which replace existing programs must be as good as, or better than, the programs which each school now offers. Although the more appropriate comparison is really with programs which each school *would be able to offer* when there are fewer students, sharing will probably not be supported unless programs are at least equal to present ones.

One school district which is part of a consortium suggests that programs which are offered initially should be new, enrichment programs which do *not* replace existing programs. This allows for a period of testing, adjustment, and building of trust. After this initial period, shared programs may be extended to replace others. In order to follow this advice, districts should begin to develop shared programs *before* they are critically needed to maintain breadth or depth of educational opportunities.

Control – accountability – responsibility

Sharing of staff can be accomplished with separation of accountability if, in effect, each district hires the person part-time and the person is responsible separately to two or more administrations.

Program sharing – whether programs are jointly developed by several districts, or programs are developed by one district or by an educational service agency, and offered to other districts – cannot occur under the separate and individual control of each participating district. Although this would seem obvious, it isn't.

Although mutual trust and good will are the most important bases for sharing, some guidelines for increasing the probability of success include:

- joint planning and development;
- clearly written agreements;
- voluntary participation – always able to withdraw, but with enough lead time so that nobody gets left in the lurch;
- equitable cost sharing – each might kick in an amount, based on total district enrollment, or dollars per student enrolled in the program, or swap teacher services/use of facilities;
- program review;
- staff review;
- joint evaluation;
- willingness to take a chance.

Students may also participate in programs offered through universities or colleges, local institutions, and agencies, or they may work with local artists, businessmen, or other community resource people. In these cases there are other means for the high school to assure that credit is granted for quality experiences. If the student is taking a formal course – at a local college or through correspondence, television, or programmed packages – high school faculty can evaluate the syllabus and levels of examinations or papers required. If the student's program is less formalized, the school can set standards of expectation ahead of time, and teachers can oversee programs as they would in any independent study project. In some states, a teacher must be legally responsible for all course work.

Perceptions of other districts

Much anxiety about sharing with other districts or institutions is caused by a combination of mistrust or ignorance of others, and local pride. People in school districts – residents, students, administrators, and faculty – are not only proud of their accomplishments; they tend to think they do things better than their neighbors.

A brief look at two community settings where schools are sharing or are considering actual consolidation may be instructive.

One case involves two adjacent districts that are very small geographically (together, maybe three square miles). Although school district boundaries are reinforced by municipal boundaries, the social worlds of students and residents overlap. Residents of both attend the same churches; often students have attended the same parochial elementary schools before attending public high school in the two districts. Adults and students in each district know each other and have friends in the other district. Typically, residents in each district stress the similarities of the two districts, even as they acknowledge differences.

In the other case, three small districts, which are also three separate municipalities, have been considering consolidation for some years. Although friendship patterns are not as cross-linked, and each village is historically quite separate, over the last few years an additional identity has been developing through cooperative efforts. There have developed tri-village fairs, a tri-village choir, tri-village athletic events, and so on. Students at the three high schools have participated in a few shared classes and a joint orchestra. As residents and students in the three districts have become better acquainted, the idea of sharing has become more accepted.

This leads to two suggestions about sharing:

- Schools which are considering shared programs should seek ways of increasing the knowledge people have of each other, increasing awareness of similarities, and downplaying what may be traditional rivalries.
- When there *are* strong feelings of separateness in districts, a consortium of many districts, or a third intermediate agency taking in many districts, may provide a better vehicle for sharing. It will be obvious that there is no danger of *all* the districts consolidating, and people may feel less strongly negative toward districts that are more distant than their neighbors – fear will be diluted.

A matter of size

High schools

Dilemmas and problems which affect all single high schools are magnified in a small school. Planning support is less. There may be less room for error in making projections, and fewer years before the impact of decline is felt. Available strategies may be fewer, particularly for the small rural high school in a geographically large district.

Staff needs in subject areas in a small school are likely to be fractional – 1.7 English teachers, .4 business, etc. And a small school, particularly in a rural area where alternatives are fewer, tends to have a more stable staff – people stay and few vacancies open up. Developing multiple competencies and/or use of part-time or shared staff will be *required* in small schools.

Scheduling problems, which affect all schools as the number of sections per course decreases, are compounded in small schools which may only have one or two sections to begin with.

Distances

Geographic size of school districts will affect feasibility of sharing with other school districts, particularly if student transportation is considered.

For a small school in a large rural district, transportation costs loom large. Not only does the district have to transport students large distances to the high school, but the cost (and time) of busing students to different sites may be great. On the other hand, these districts are experienced and knowledgeable about transportation, and increased busing might be possible at incremental cost, particularly if the schools themselves are not too far apart. People who live in rural areas are accustomed to traveling further. (A school board from the rural district in our consortium even floated the idea of a busing network that could serve not only school districts, but community residents as well.)

For a small school in a small suburban town, distances may be small enough that students could walk to a neighboring district school. On the other hand, such a district might not be equipped to provide transportation now, and might need to invest in buses or vans, and drivers, either alone or with other districts. If the high schools in two adjacent towns are on opposite sides of the districts, transportation might be required to effect sharing of students, and the cost might not justify it.

The size of the school district will also affect feasibility of sharing with other community resources. How many such resources are available within easy distance (either for taking students *to* or getting help *from*)?

Money

Concern about financing and costs was common to all strategies. School districts are facing enrollment decline in a time of limited public resources – tax levy limitations, voter reluctance to increase taxes, absolute budget ceilings, restructuring of state education finance systems. Enrollment decline does not automatically reduce costs – a fact

which is well known to school boards, administrators, and faculty, but which is not well known to the general public.

It is fair to say that without the burden of financial pressures, most single high school districts might not consider any of the strategies presented. They might simply offer the same number of courses to mere handfuls of students.

Evaluation of the financial costs of each strategy clearly has to be part of overall evaluation, and has to be weighed against educational program quality. While strategies all provide methods for improving or maintaining high school programs, some will cost more than others. The financial impact of any given strategy will depend on the specifics of the community; no general rules can be applied.

If goals and priorities are established first, and alternative methods are explored and evaluated, financial concerns will find an appropriate place. However, if "planning" is approached as a line item search of existing budgets (which reflect existing methods of staffing and programs) for items to strike out, results will be disastrous.

Over the course of six months of consortium meetings, we found that participants were able to make clearer distinctions between program and cost, as they realized that there were other than traditional ways for providing program opportunities.

Roles for states

Declining school enrollment has been a source of tension between local school districts and state education agencies. In the past, state-level concerns have often focused on school or school district consolidation and economics of scale. Local districts have been loath to approach state agencies for help, fearing that they would only suggest (or mandate) consolidation. Local districts often feel that the state is not sensitive to local situations, or worse, find that state laws and regulations block locally-initiated solutions.

Although this report is written for local districts, we offer a brief listing of areas for possible state action which should be examined both by state agencies and local districts.

- Support for locally-initiated consortia or sharing arrangements: Legislation may be needed to permit school districts to develop cooperative agreements with other school districts, municipal governments, or other community agencies.
- Regional education agencies: Development of, or support for, a system of regional agencies which would include all school districts in the state, and could organize or coordinate cooperative programs, staff sharing, and so on, would be of special help to districts that cannot find partners for cooperative ventures on their own. Services of existing agencies could be expanded to include services needed by school districts with declining enrollment.
- Teacher certification and tenure: Laws in most states need to be reconsidered, especially at the high school level,

during a period of enrollment decline. Laws and regulations need to balance the district's need to have qualified faculty in all program areas, teachers' rights, affirmative action goals, and need to be flexible enough to cover new job configurations which may develop.

- Teacher and administrator training: State-supported schools of education need training programs to meet needs of local districts, such as multiple competency.
- Inservice training and retraining: State educational institutions can take a leadership role in developing programs to help current teachers gain additional certification; gain up-to-date competence in areas where their certification in a field is rusty; develop new skill areas such as teaching adults and teenagers in the same classes, or teaching several courses in the same classroom; and to help administrators and teachers develop skills in planning for enrollment decline.
- Eligible students to be covered by state aid: Some states provide financial aid for students enrolled in courses leading to a high school diploma, regardless of age.
- Permissive local tax levy for community education: In several midwestern states, local schools have broadened their clientele and their role in the community, through a locally-initiated tax levied in addition to school taxes.
- Transportation reimbursement: If states recognized cooperative programs as an alternative to consolidation, they might extend transportation assistance for shared programs among districts, and for other programs in which students go out of the high school – to community service colleges, etc.
- Financial aid to small rural districts: Small, rural districts argue that state aid formulas should have a differential for them, since their per pupil costs are often higher. They argue that maintaining small rural schools is often the only practical solution.
- Cooperation among universities, community colleges, other social service agencies, and local school districts: States can assume leadership in seeking areas of cooperation and mutual support among social service agencies, and in avoiding duplication and competition among educational institutions.

Finally, local school districts need assistance in developing plans for not only coping with declining enrollment, but for discovering and taking advantage of the opportunities that are also present. States can be active partners in helping local districts to develop plans which are responsive to local conditions.

In sum

We and members of our consortium found value in discussing issues from the perspectives of different constituencies. In some cases we were surprised by the similarities of concerns expressed by representatives of constituencies we had thought would be far apart. Sometimes the concerns were quite different than our early expectations. For example, teachers and residents without children in school were champions of radical rethinking of the goals of education and the role of the high school in the community; students were the most conservative regarding any change.

And sometimes, a group which we might have anticipated to speak strongly in unison, held widely divergent views. For example, when discussing multiple competence and retraining, the teachers found themselves evenly split over whether they were teachers first and subject matter specialists second, or the reverse.

Open discussion leads to better understanding of each other's concerns, before positions are formally established and need to be defended. It also leads to better understanding of issues, and tradeoffs to be made in evaluating alternate strategies.

Probably most people would agree with a student consortium member who said, "We don't want to change anything. We don't want to have to choose between options. We like things the way they are."

However, since change will come, since things cannot continue as they are, a better understanding of issues and concerns of various constituencies is basic to the decision-making process we propose in the following section.

Part

4

Decision Making

Enrollment decline at the high school level, and particularly in single high school districts, poses some tough problems and requires some hard decisions.

In this section, we present recommendations for making decisions in a logical, structured fashion. We believe that the process used, as well as the results which emerge, will be most likely to succeed if there is an organizing scheme which ties the pieces together. This does not mean that decision making should be rigid; on the contrary it needs to be flexible. Nor does it mean that there is one best decision which can be arrived at through application of rules and facts. Good decisions will be based on values and emotions, too.

However, a logical planning process can provide the framework for airing concerns and values, for setting priorities, for weighing alternatives, and ultimately, for developing a plan of action which has broad community support and will result in a high school which meets community needs.

An underlying theme in the recommendations presented is that planning and decision making are everybody's business. Declining enrollment and strategies for dealing with it affect all constituents of the single high school district – students, administrators, teachers, school board members, residents with children in school, residents without children in school, and community interest groups and organizations. All of these people have legitimate concerns and a legitimate stake in the outcome, and all should be involved in reaching decisions.

Start planning before reaching a crisis

Planning takes time, and carrying out plans takes time. Therefore the time to start is *before* a crisis emerges. Most districts with declining enrollment in the high school will have recently dealt with elementary school decline. However, the elementary school experience cannot be applied directly to the high school – the nature of planning and the nature of potential crises differ.

Planning at the elementary level often focuses on issues of building capacity, class size, student attendance areas and redistricting, developing criteria for school consolidation, and exploring reuse or joint use options in surplus school space. These are essentially issues of mechanics – rarely is the fundamental nature of the elementary school program the key issue.

Planning at the high school level, in the single high school district, should focus directly on the fundamental nature of the high school program, and alternative ways of providing desired program opportunities. Exploration of alternatives is more likely to require rethinking of faculty roles and program structure, uncovering and probing opportunities for cooperation with other school districts, and other institutions and organizations. This kind of planning is more complex and time-consuming than the numbers-based mechanics of elementary school planning.

Crisis at the elementary grades is often reached when the first school closing is announced, or when the possibility of closing schools is broached.

The previous numbered page in the original document was blank

In the single high school district, closing the high school is the least likely action to be proposed. Rather, small classes – specialized, advanced, or elective courses – are likely to be dropped when "not enough" students sign up. Since each individual action affects only a few students, recognition of a crisis may not emerge until the program offerings have been severely reduced, and the nature of the high school program has changed dramatically. This combination of complex issues and lack of early crisis makes problem recognition all the more important so that planning can get under way.

Problem recognition

Recognizing that there is a problem is the first step. The original recognition may come from anyone – teachers, high school principal, school board member, superintendent, citizen.

Obviously, grade level enrollment figures and projections – which every district should have close tabs on – will tell you whether the total numbers are going up or down, and by how much. But how do you know if those numbers forecast a "problem"? If the district has already closed one or more schools, there's a good bet there will be a problem. If the current high school enrollment is somewhere around 600, and a 20 percent decline is projected, you've got a problem. In fact, just looking at numbers, if your high school enrollment peaked recently, and you project a 30 percent decline in another five years, chances are good that you should be planning now.

The problem recognition checklist provides additional clues that declining enrollment may already be having an impact at the high school level.

Problem Recognition Checklist

Ask the following questions about your high school. If you are a board member or a member of the school administration, you may know the answers offhand. Some questions can be easily answered by students. If you are a parent, or a member of a citizen study group, ask the high school administration to investigate these questions. If a significant number of these items apply to your district, you should be planning now; if you're not, you should get started.

- ☐ **Do more courses have only one or two sections than was the case a few years ago?**
- ☐ **Are all courses listed being offered? Are any being cancelled because too few students signed up?**
- ☐ **Are fourth- and fifth-level languages being taught in the same class (or combined classes)?**
- ☐ **Has the school board recently passed a new minimum class size policy?**
- ☐ **Do many classes have fewer than 10 or 12 students? How many?**
- ☐ **Are teachers competing to get students to sign up for their elective classes?**

- ☐ **Are students having a harder time taking courses they want because of more schedule conflicts?**
- ☐ **Are many teachers having more "free time," or are they being assigned to teach courses they haven't taught before?**
- ☐ **Are there significantly fewer high school teachers than there were a few years ago?**
- ☐ **Is the high school having difficulty finding people to coach all athletic teams?**
- ☐ **Is the high school having trouble getting enough students to field athletic teams, to fill the orchestra, etc.?**
- ☐ **Have many extracurricular activities been discontinued in the last few years?**
- ☐ **Is the entering high school class much smaller than it was a few years ago?**
- ☐ **Are students having a harder time finding enough people to run the school paper, put out the yearbook, organize class proms, stage plays, or participate in student government or other activities?**

Recognizing the need for planning is not always easy, nor are those closest to the situation necessarily the first to see it. In a study carried out a few years ago in Colorado, fully 10 percent of the *superintendents* in school districts with significant enrollment decline reported that enrollment was stable or growing. The author pointed out that this was very surprising, since the amount of state aid received in Colorado is tied directly to the district's average daily attendance.

In our own survey of districts with declining enrollment, conducted to select our consortium, we found great variation in perceptions. Similar projections of enrollment decline were interpreted by some superintendents as posing a problem, by others as posing no problem whatsoever.

Problem Recognition is Not Automatic

It is a well-known psychological principle that there is a tendency to suppress images of the world which are disagreeable to us, and if our whole society is growth oriented and if our skills are in the handling of growth, it will not be surprising if the very image of decline is rejected even when the objective data suggests that decline has in fact taken place.

– Kenneth Boulding

Regardless of who first recognizes that there is, or might be a problem, this recognition has to become shared and publicly accepted before real planning begins. The administration at the high school and central office, teachers, school board, and community residents have to be convinced of the need for planning. The school board should acknowledge – on public record – that declining enrollment at the high school is a priority issue. A sense of shared urgency has to be cultivated.

Basic data – enrollment and staff projections by program

Basic data for the high school – comparable to building utilization figures, and student/staff ratios by grade level at the elementary level – are enrollment and staff projections by broad program area.

Collection of enrollment and staff figures by subject or program area for the last five years, and projection of those figures for the next five years, is the best way to test what the impact would be *if* business were to continue as usual.

Identify broad programs and subject areas – such as art, science, guidance, foreign language. (One reason for using this is that subject areas usually correspond to teacher certification categories.) Collect total enrollment figures at all high school grades in all courses in each area. For example, under "science," total the enrollment in all science courses – earth science, biology, chemistry, ninth-grade science, etc. Figure the total staff for each program, based on full-time equivalence (full teaching staff load = 1 FTE). In a large district, this information may already be routinely collected by the district planning office. In a small district with minimal central office support, the high school principal may have to dig the information out of teacher assignment files.

Figure out program enrollment as a percentage of the total enrollment for high school grades (9-12, 10-12, or 8-12, whatever you have) for the last five years. Then look at this "market share," so to speak. Has there been a trend either toward an increasing proportion of students in this program, or a decreasing proportion? If so, compute the average yearly *change* of percentage enrollment over the five-year period.

To project program enrollment for the next five years, multiply the average percentage, or the changing proportion, by the total high school enrollment projections for each of the next five years.

For example: If enrollment in art has averaged about 40% for the last five years, then multiply the total base enrollment projected for each of the next five years by 40%. If enrollment in art has been dropping an average of 2% a year, and this year stands at 40%, then multiply the total base enrollment projected for each of the next five years by 38%, 36%, 34%, 32%, and 30%, respectively.

Then looking at the staffing ratios (program enrollment/program staff FTE) for the last five years apply the average ratio (or this year's) to the projected program enrollment figures. This will give you an estimate of staff needs in each major program area.* You might also want to use current school board policy on student/staff ratios to arrive at a staff needs estimate.

*It is also possible to do the same kind of projection at a finer scale, projecting individual course enrollment as a percentage of program enrollment. This might be desired in some area, such as foreign language, where you might want to focus on individual languages and where faculty is not interchangeable among languages. The smaller the numbers, though, the less reliable the projection.

Program ART

	Past (Current year –)					Current Year	Projected (Current year +)				
	CY-5	CY-4	CY-3	CY-2	CY-1		CY+1	CY+2	CY+3	CY+4	CY+5
	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Total High School Enrollment (Grades 9 to 12)	997	992	983	977	950	937	880	790	730	690	665
Total Program Enrollment	488	466	432	420	399	375	334	284	248	221	200
Program Enrollment ÷ Total H.S. Enrollment	49%	47%	44%	43%	42%	40%	38%	36%	34%	32%	30%
Program Enrollment ÷ Program Staff	108.4	103.5	108	105	100	107.2	110	110	110	110	110
Program Staff (FTE)*	4.5	4.5	4	4	4	3.5	3	2.6	2.3	2	1.8

*FTE Based on full teaching load of 5 class sections @ ~~this~~ students

1 Program Enrollment Projection Based on:

- ☐ Average program enrollment/total enrollment, past 6 years = _____
- ☑ Average change in program enrollment/total enrollment, past 6 years = 2% Decline
- ☐ Other _____

2 Program Staff Projection Based on:

- ☐ Average program enrollment/program staff, past 6 years = _____
- ☑ Current school board policy on ~~program enrollment~~/program staff = 110 (5 class sections @ 22 students)
- ☐ Current year ratio program enrollment/program staff = _____
- ☐ Other _____

Special Assumptions:

Decrease in percentage of art enrollment appears to reflect shift towards vocational courses. Projection assumes this decline will continue.

This basic information will provide initial guidance on future impacts of high school enrollment decline, *if programs continue as they are now*. It will give you a good idea of which program areas are "in jeopardy," how many teachers would be needed in each area, and how many students would be affected by termination of a program.

This information is of course rough, but it is a good starting place for planning. It will do the job of letting you know if, and when, high school enrollment decline will require change from business as usual.

Preliminary development of this information should be enough to create a sense of urgency, to support a public statement by the board of education, and to justify formal development of a planning team approach to investigating enrollment decline and plans for the future. This information should be publicized in the community.

Establishing a planning team

Planning for enrollment decline should be conducted by a planning team that is broadly representative of all constituencies – school board, superintendent and other administrators, teachers, students, community businesses and organizations, and residents with and without children in school.

There are very strong arguments for having a single, broadly representative planning team. On the philosophic side, public education is a community endeavor which should reflect community values and goals. Although local determination is limited by minimum curriculum mandated at the state level, many important decisions will remain with the local level. And although the board of education is elected (occasionally appointed) to make local policy, a thorough review of the high school, its purposes, and role in the community is too large an undertaking for the board alone.

On the practical side, a plan which is developed cooperatively, with active and equal participation by all constituencies, is more likely to succeed. It is more likely to have broad based support, less likely to be seriously challenged, and more likely to be implemented with good humor, if not enthusiasm.

The importance of planning team representation is greater at the high school than at the elementary school level – another departure from early experience gained in dealing with declining enrollment. Residents without children in school have a vested interest in the high school as a community institution that they don't have in neighborhood elementary schools, and they *want* to be involved. Since the nature of the program, the way the program is delivered, and the role of faculty are all up for grabs, faculty and administrators have a greater stake in the high school. Since strategies which result may include greater cooperation with other community groups and institutions, they need to be involved. And so on.

Involvement by all constituencies from the beginning will save time in the long run and result in a better plan. The basic reason is that understanding of the scope of the problem, of reasons for selecting and rejecting strategies, and other facets of decision making will be developed at the same time. Disagreements and conflicts can be worked out

step by step, and compromises reached before the final plan is developed. When a plan is developed and *then* submitted for review, the reviewers have to restudy the whole process, and the stakes are raised.

The planning team concept is often quick to draw fire from those who have never tried it – school board members and citizens alike. It is highly praised by those who have used it or similar mechanisms for joint, broad based decision making. While conflicts, and clashes of opinions and values cannot be avoided, the planning team is a way to accept and deal with differences in a creative fashion with much higher probability of developing consensus and support.

Finally, planning processes which either deny participation to some constituents, or channel participation to review of a plan or to development of competing plans do not work well. As the following digest of feelings expressed by consortium members testifies, such "traditional" planning leaves everybody feeling frustrated and maligned.

Feelings About Planning Roles Expressed by Consortium Members

Community residents: **Those who have been on citizen advisory committees often feel their effort was wasted. They feel they have been manipulated when they put their best effort into a job, and their report is not taken seriously, is ignored, or is rejected;**

without children in school: **additionally, they feel they are unfairly maligned and accused of not supporting education.**

with children in school: **additionally, feel they are dismissed as self-interested and lacking in the "broader view."**

Teachers: **Usually not part of general planning efforts, they feel acted *on* and manipulated. As the people who will carry out plans or be affected by them, they want to help make them. They often feel that education of students gets lost in the shuffle. They also want to see greater community participation in establishing goals and purpose of education – they feel they are asked to do everybody's bidding.**

Students: **As the other half of those directly affected, they feel that they will be unfairly cheated out of what others have had. They feel their interests are not really considered, and that they are pawns.**

School board members: **They feel they "know" their communities and they've been elected to make the decisions. Some feel attacked by others' requests to take part in planning. They may feel their personal integrity is being challenged.**

Superintendents: **They feel put in an awkward position, as though they are often set up to deliver the bad news and then take the heat – and sometimes lose their jobs in the process. They feel their traditional role of educational leader is being usurped by the school board.**

High school principals: **They feel in perhaps the most awkward position of all, and uncertain as to their roles**

relative to superintendents and to school boards. They don't know whether they are leaders and should take initiative, or whether they are lieutenants and should avoid sticking their necks out. They don't feel they've been treated, or listened to, as leaders.

It is the responsibility of the school board to see that a planning team is formed, and to establish and affirm its legitimacy. Whether this team is appointed by the board, whether the board requests groups to designate representatives, whether the board delegates responsibility to the superintendent, or whether volunteers are invited makes little difference *so long as* broad representation of constituencies is achieved; the team is viewed by the community as representative; and opportunity for participation is always open to additional people.

The role of the planning team is, of course, advisory. Only the school board can make and change policy. However, school board members should participate in the team, and the school board should be committed to take its advice seriously. Too often the word "advisory" is used to establish distance between a committee and a board, and board members too often appear to prepare themselves to disown the results of the study even before the team is formed. School board participation is important. Just as trouble can be anticipated if the school board presents a final plan to the public with no prior public involvement, trouble can be anticipated if a "citizens committee" presents a final plan to the board with no prior board involvement.

Charting a planning process

A method and schedule for planning should be developed early. The planning team should decide how to spend its efforts and time, what support services will be needed when, and how and when broader participation will be sought.

A thorough planning effort may take several years. Relatively few people – the core planning team – will be active for the entire period, and it is difficult to sustain widespread interest for that long. Planning team task forces will do much of the detailed work on specific topics, sharing their findings with the full team. Community members, teachers, or whoever is interested should have the opportunity to participate in task forces.

Periodically, large public meetings should be held to review and debate progress with the whole community. Simply having meetings be open to the public throughout the planning process is not enough to assure widespread knowledge and discussion. Periodic review and assessment meetings need to be accompanied by an all-out publicity campaign.

The planning process may be divided into several further stages:

- Defining problems and goals
- Setting priorities
- Exploring and evaluating options
- Developing a plan of action.

Stage Two: Defining problems and goals

The planning team and broader community have a preliminary sense of the problem – that declining enrollment at the high school requires something *other* than business as usual.

We suggest that problem definition revolves around three basic questions: 1. Who do we want the high school to serve, and how should it do so? 2. What role do we want the high school to play as a community institution? 3. How do we get from here to there within our resources?

Information needs

In order to answer these questions, and develop a clear definition of problems and goals, the team will have to gather basic information. Some of the information may be easily available and some will require probing. It is important that information be equally known by all team members, and by the community, and that people agree that it is true.

Facts and figures – the "hard data" – are the easiest to gather. Team members will need to review the basic data already gathered:

- district enrollment figures by grade level (historic and projected);
- program enrollment and staff figures (both historic and projected) at the high school.

The team will also need to gather and review information about:

- staff certification, tenure, etc.;
- district finances;
- enrollment figures for neighboring districts;
- community population, housing projections.

All projections are based on assumptions – be sure to identify the assumptions. Explore major events or special circumstances which might change the projections – e.g. construction of a new factory, or closing of parochial schools. Reach agreement on the likelihood of the assumptions coming true. You may make projections based on upper and lower bounds of key variables, or two sets of projections based on two very different sets of assumptions (for example, finances might be projected both if the local property tax remains the basic revenue source, and if state equalization laws establish a new base).

Information on values and assessments and concerns – the "soft data" – is more ambiguous, but equally important. It may be valuable to seek perceptions from each constituent group. Within our consortium, constituent groups – teachers, parents, students, etc. – met together to trade ideas and then presented them to the entire group. They found this to be a useful technique.

The team will need to gather information about:

- strengths and weaknesses in high school program areas – faculty, facilities, curriculum, etc.;
- what people perceive as valuable about the high school as a community institution;
- community expectations for an adequate high school program;
- how people feel about "local control," about neighboring communities, and so on;

- what other services, roles, programs people would like to see available through the high school.

Various methods can be used to gather this information – surveys, small group meetings of constituent groups, or large public meetings. Expect to find variation and difference of opinion. The entire planning team should try to understand the concerns and values of all people.

Problems and goals

The information gathered – both facts and perceptions – is the basis for developing problem and goal statements.

Explore the implications of enrollment and staff projections. Assess strengths and weaknesses. Will the problems be related to certain curriculum areas (business, art), to certain kinds of courses or programs (advanced elective courses, sports, guidance), or will the problems be wide-ranging?

Consider all the expectations about what the high school ought to be, what its role in the community ought to be, and whom it ought to serve. Look for commonalities underneath surface variations and identify real differences. The team will have to thrash out differences to achieve consensus.

Once tentative statements of problems and goals are developed, the team should present them to the community at large, to constituent groups, and to the school board. Since these statements define the focus of the planning effort, they need widespread acceptance.

Stage Three: Setting priorities

Developing a single list of priorities is probably the most difficult planning stage and the most crucial. The purpose of this stage is to develop a list and ranking which has the broadest base of support among all constituents, and which reflects minority concerns as well. This list should become the major evaluation tool for considering different strategies.

Let's take the small example of instrumental music, illustrated earlier, and look at two alternatives for how to deal with fewer students. One is to abandon a full orchestra or band, and concentrate on chamber music and small ensemble instruments and music. Another is to continue to have band and orchestra, but to open up membership to all community residents. These two alternatives represent radically different perceptions of the role of the high school in the community, and two different sets of values. Assume the cost and staffing implications are identical. Unless there is agreement on values, priorities, and goals, there are no grounds for choosing one or the other.

This stage should include wide participation and public debate. After all, you will be trying to determine relative importance of such basic issues as saving money, local control, broad opportunities vs. concentrating more on fewer opportunities, keeping existing staff, service to one age group or many, and so on.

As the list develops, the team should keep a record of the special concerns of people who disagree with the ranking. The final plan of action may be able to address some of these concerns, too.

Setting priorities in the abstract may be difficult. Preliminary review of alternative strategies may reveal values which were not considered before, or a different ordering of priorities. As the team becomes more familiar with options it may have to step back and reassess priorities and values.

Several lists may emerge – a list of immediate priority needs or goals, as well as long-range needs and goals – identifying which program areas are in most immediate need of attention (probably those with lowest enrollments). Another list may include criteria which solutions must meet, as well as a secondary listing of criteria it would be desirable to meet, if possible.

The planning team should develop tentative lists, based on all the information available. These lists should be "tried out" in community meetings, and in constituency meetings. If necessary, the lists should be modified, and then adopted as working tools for evaluating options and strategies.

Stage Four: Exploring and evaluating options

The entire planning team should conduct a brief review of all the strategies presented in this report, to get an idea of the range of possible alternatives. Strategies which are obviously wrong for your district may be eliminated, but be clear about why they are being ruled out. They may not look so bad later, or the process of ruling them out may clarify values.

Then set about exploring the remaining strategies to see whether they meet criteria and will contribute towards reaching the goals established earlier. The experience from our consortium suggests that no single strategy is likely to meet all needs. Strategies may be mixed and matched to develop a comprehensive plan. Several strategies may be used in sequence, as numbers of students decrease.

For example, grade reorganization – bringing the ninth grade into a 10-12 high school, and consolidating two junior high schools – may be a long-range option of choice, but can't be implemented until there is a reasonable match between numbers of students and sizes of buildings. And, although grade reorganization will eventually meet many of the goals, it does not solve the problem of advanced courses which are jeopardized due to low enrollment. Other strategies will have to be considered for advanced courses, and until grade reorganization can be implemented.

The planning team will probably divide into task forces for this stage, and broaden participation to include people who are interested in or knowledgeable about one or another strategy. There are several ways of dividing the team for this work – along program lines or identified areas of need (for example, art, languages, advanced courses, remedial courses, sports and other extracurricular activities) to explore each strategy as it relates to that area, or by strategy or groupings of strategies. Each task force should be representative of several constituencies in the planning team.

Information needs

Exploration of each strategy will require gathering additional information – scouting out possible sharing partners among other districts or other local resource groups, exploring multiple competencies and scheduling alternatives, or identifying and assessing interest among new "clients."

Each strategy in this report is really quite broad. Part of the work will be to "play out" possible scenarios – drawing a detailed picture of what a strategy might mean for your district. Elaborate on implications each strategy might have for students, teachers, facilities, high school "identity," finance, transportation, community programs, politics, and so forth.

One of the most useful ways to explore options is to identify some other districts which are using different strategies. Writing, visiting, and talking with people in those districts will help in assessing problems and potential relevance to your own situation.

For example, to explore strategy no. 2 – adapting the existing school structure to serve fewer students – members of the team should visit districts which now have the number of students you anticipate having. Regardless of your current enrollment, there are schools now functioning with your projected enrollment. We found great reluctance to do this even among our consortium districts, whose members were interested in sharing notes on other topics. People in districts with larger schools tend to assume they offer a better education to their students than smaller schools, and expect to do so even as their enrollment drops.

Task forces should explore, too, how different constituencies react to each strategy, and should report back to the planning team on their investigations. The headings under *Task Force Strategy Report* may be a useful guide for reporting to the full team. It would help to actually produce written reports, to publicize these reports among the community and constituent groups, encourage public discussion, and listen to reactions.

Evaluation

Once the planning team task forces have explored strategies and reported their findings, the full team should begin to evaluate them as components of a plan for action. The priorities and criteria established earlier should form the basis for evaluation. The list might look something like this:

- education opportunities for students
- special needs of special populations
- educational opportunities for people not now served
- community values, pride (identity, control ...)
- flexibility to meet changing needs
- affect on morale, students, staff, residents
- dollar cost and tradeoffs
- ease of implementation/degree of disruption
- political support from constituencies
- staff stability
- long term suitability
- impact on rest of school system
- if involves sharing, willingness and interest on part of others to share.

Task Force Strategy Report

For what program areas or identified need is this appropriate?

For what program areas in need is it not appropriate? Why?

Describe how you envision this strategy working: (describe as specifically as possible)

Identify potential impacts with regard to:

- ☐ existing programs
- ☐ students
- ☐ teachers
- ☐ administrators
- ☐ high school "identity"
- ☐ schedules
- ☐ community residents
- ☐ facilities
- ☐ finance
- ☐ transportation
- ☐ role of high school as community institution
- ☐ other priority issues

For each district you identified/visited that is using this strategy:

- ☐ evaluate their program
- ☐ what's good; what would you want to incorporate
- ☐ what's bad; what would you want to steer clear of; what ideas about how to do so
- ☐ what are feelings, reactions of different constituents

Solicit reactions to this strategy from all constituents and list.

Do you see this as a possible long term/short term strategy?

- ☐ Does it require legal changes? If so, what?
- ☐ Does it require policy changes? If so, what?
- ☐ Does it require operational changes? If so, what?

How long would it take to implement?

List what steps would have to be taken to further investigate this strategy.

Again, different strategies may make sense for different program areas or needs. For example, all of the following strategies might receive a high score: sharing a teacher with a neighboring district for foreign language, opening up enrollment in all courses to community residents in all program areas, creating a joint orchestra with another district, looking to local industry for vocational training, and so on.

Some strategies may make sense for immediate implementation (hiring a part-time math teacher) while others (encouraging multiple competency or joint hiring through an educational consortium) may take longer to implement but are strong long term strategies.

The planning team should share its evaluations with all constituent groups. Team members who represent constituencies should report back to them and seek responses and suggestions, and public meetings should be convened.

Stage Five: Developing a plan of action

Putting the pieces together from the evaluations, from considerations of short term and long term usefulness, will result in a plan of action.

Policy

None of the strategies may be refined enough at this point to implement, but they will be clear enough to make policy decisions – such as whether to increase areas of certification of existing faculty members, to restructure curriculum for more flexible scheduling, or to seek cooperative agreements with other districts.

The board of education will have to adopt policies that will allow implementation to go ahead. Remember, if board members have been actively involved in the planning team, are convinced that the plan represents the best view of all constituencies, and that it has broad community support, then the school board should be able to adopt the plan relatively easily. (If the board has *not* been involved, it may shelve the report, while conducting its own study.)

Action

Only after the policy plan has been publicly adopted by the school board, is it time to go to the next step.

The policy plan may authorize particular strategies for further study, in preparation for final review and implementation. Others may be implemented immediately.

At this point, much of the work will be technical, and require expertise of faculty, administrators, transportation coordinators, business administrators, and lawyers.

For example, curriculum restructuring may be assigned to a committee of faculty members and administrators. Staffing needs may require special evaluation of staff interest areas and plans, negotiation of new contract conditions, and development of inservice training programs. Exploration of sharing possibilities may require meetings at several levels of various constituent groups in two or more school districts. Planning to start a cooperative program, itself, may take a year.

The principle of public discussion, review, and debate before adoption, however, should be continued throughout

the implementation period. Tentative plans and arrangements should be reviewed by the planning team and by the community as a whole, to assure continued support, and to check that the refined plans do in fact meet the goals and priorities set earlier.

Obviously, too, no plan is permanent and unchanging. Periodic review, assessment, and revision should be an ongoing concern.

How different will your school be in five years' time? Will students be out in the community? Will adults and teenagers be sitting side by side? Will you have a small cadre of teachers who can teach a broad range of courses, perhaps supplemented by community experts? Will students be engaged in more independent study projects, or be taking college courses, under faculty supervision? What will the school day, or school week be?

Who will your students be? Who will your teachers be? What will your high school be? Will it be? Who will say? Such is the challenge of declining enrollment at the high school in the single high school district.

From here, we can only offer one observation. Your high school in five years will not be the same-declining enrollment will see to that. The rest is up to you-student, school board member, teacher, resident, parent, administrator ...

The previous numbered page in the original document was blank

Educational Facilities Laboratories is an institution devoted to research, public information, and technical assistance in areas of immediate concern to schools, colleges, social service agencies, and other people-serving organizations. EFL is a division of the Academy for Educational Development, 680 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10019.

Alan Green, director of EFL, first identified the need for this project, and provided leadership and guidance throughout. Ellen Bussard, project director, undertook the research and wrote this report.

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1981 727-923/1734